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22 In-Depth Reviews

- The Beast Within
- Allied General
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April 1996
Vol. 3, No. 4

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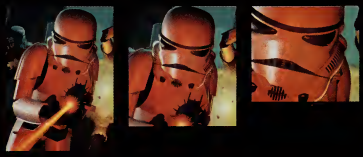

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PC GAMER
VOLUME 3 NUMBER 4 • APRIL 1996

Cover Story

Can MicroProse RECAPTURE the MAGIC?

After a year marred by lackluster titles, the software giant that brought us such classics as *Gunship*, *Civilization*, and *X-COM* is taking a back-to-basics approach and planning to hit us with some of the most highly-anticipated sequels in computer game history. We'll give you the lowdown on their new lineup, which includes *X-COM: Apocalypse*, *Master of Orion II*, and – yes – *Civilization II*.

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Looking For A Few Good Games

In this exclusive report, the Desktop General rubs shoulders with real-life generals to find out why the U.S. Marines are playing *Doom* and how PC gaming has taken on a significant role in the Corps' training plans.

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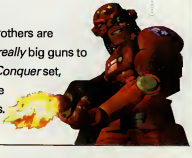

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Magic Time

I remember when *Railroad Tycoon* first hit the stands. It didn't sound like much fun to me — I was much more interested in flying simulated fighters and helicopters than in the business of building a rail empire — but I bought the game anyway, because of two names I saw on the box: Sid Meier and MicroProse. See, back then, I bought *any* MicroProse game sight-unseen, because I knew it would be terrific — all their stuff was. And I wasn't disappointed with *Railroad Tycoon*; it was a masterpiece.

Alas, MicroProse doesn't have quite the same reputation it had back then. Like so many companies that grow as quickly as they did, Maryland's gaming legend seemed to lose focus and control over their products. They still put out some wonderful stuff — I'll put *F-15 III*, *Fleet Defender*, and *Pacific Air War* up against any air combat sim on the market, and *X-COM* and *Master of Orion* were instant strategy classics — but they released some real clunkers, too.

The good news is that the folks at MicroProse aren't sitting around wondering what went wrong; they've killed some questionable projects, and they're going back to the strengths that made them great — simulations and strategy games. Do the names *X-COM: Apocalypse*, *Master of Orion II*, and *Sid Meier's Civilization II* whet your gaming appetite?

Yeah, I thought they might. And there's more where that came from. It starts on page 64.

Dan

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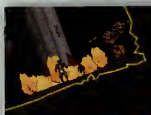


"**DOOM** is DEAD — long live **Duke Nukem 3D**, could this be the greatest PC shoot'em-up ever?" — X-GEN / Next Generation

"**Duke Nukem 3D** truly looks like a 3D supermodel of a game: sleek, sexy, and gory with lead-thrashing action." — Strategy Plus

"The BFG was a pop-gun, (it's) got nothing on the sophisticated hi-tech weaponry at Duke Nukem's disposal." — Computer Gaming World

"Nowhere is safe from Duke's pounding, lasering action as you fight the alien scum in the streets." — PC Attack

Complete Version

For more details, make tracks to your local software retailer!

Shareware Version

The plot thickens...

Welcome once again to the world of *PC Gamer*. Things have been a little crazy around here since our near-miss at the Discotheque of Doom last month. Check out *The CD*, and our receptionist, Cheryl, will fill you in on the details; the images are still too fresh in our minds to discuss it. The horror — the horror.

We only hope we can track down the filthy simian-snatcher before the loss of our beloved *PCG* monkey, Rikits, throws us into a deep depression forever. We miss his affectionate hair-yanking and the way he used to beat us at *Command & Conquer* just by slapping at the mouse and keyboard.

If you happen to find any clues to Rikits' whereabouts this month, just jot 'em down and hang onto 'em for now. Remember, it won't do us much good until you get *all* the facts. Good detective work takes time — when you've got the whole story, you'll know.

Meanwhile, keep an eye on upcoming editions of *The CD*. Anyone evil enough to steal a loving, sensitive monkey has to make a mistake sometime. And when he does, we're counting on you to help us nab him!

Entering Our World

You begin in the secluded alley that leads to the hidden *PC Gamer* elevator. Move your mouse pointer around the screen until it turns into an arrow. Click, and you'll move in the direction of the arrow.

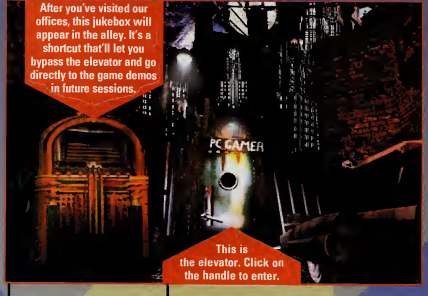
Click on the door handle to open the elevator, then click forward to step inside. Turn around until you're facing the front of the elevator and click on the button.

Once you're in our offices, you can move around using the mouse. To check out the game demos, click on the jukebox. When you're ready to leave, move your mouse to the top of the screen, and a menu will appear with an exit option.

Quick Start for The CD

Our new front end is Windows-based, so setup couldn't be easier:

1. Insert the CD and load Windows.
2. From the RUN option (found under the File menu in Windows 3.1 or under Windows 95's Start menu) type X:SETUP (where X is the letter of your CD-ROM drive).
3. This will create the *PC Gamer* icon group. Click on the icon, and *The CD* will launch.



Using the Jukebox

System Requirements

486/33; 4MB RAM; 8MB hard-drive space; Mouse (Win 3.1 users will need to be sure they've got the SHARE.EXE utility loaded)

These requirements are for loading our front end program only. Each game demo will have its own additional requirements, so be sure to read them carefully.

Click on one of the six category buttons, and the demos in that category will appear on the monitor.

Click on the name of the demo you're interested in, and you'll receive installation info.

Attention Win95 Users

The new *PC Gamer* front end should work fine with Windows 95. To install and run some DOS game demos, you may need to reboot into a DOS session. If the videos appear as full-screen sequences, you should enter the Control Panel's Multimedia option and set it to View in Window.

Free Demos

Newsstand buyers now have the choice of purchasing either the CD-ROM Edition of *PC Gamer* for $7.99, or *PC Gamer* without a CD-ROM for $3.99. If you purchase the edition without a disc, you can still get free game demos because all *PC Gamer* readers have the opportunity to get demos and other goodies in a couple of different ways:

1. You can download demos and check out *PC Gamer*'s new look at our World Wide Web site at *http://www.pcgamer.com* on the Internet. Our Web site also features a special Strategy Plus section, links to other hot Web pages, and gaming news.

2. You can call our Customer Service department at (415) 696-1661 (between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. PST) to have the CD mailed to you for only $5.95 shipping and handling.

Disc Editor's Note

Because each month's edition of *The CD* has new material and demos, it installs its own files to your hard-drive. That means you'll need to re-install the software each time you get a new edition of *The CD* or want to go back and look at an earlier disc. We understand that installing software is about as exciting as clipping your toenails — but it, too, is a necessity.

Installation Shortcuts

In the event our front end doesn't load or run properly on your machine, you can still install each demo, bypassing our front end altogether.

To manually install a demo, take a look at the Command Box located to the right. This box contains a list of demos along with their directories and installation commands.

To get up and running using the Command Box, first switch to your CD-ROM drive and change to the appropriate directory by typing CD\DIRECTORY, where DIRECTORY is the one listed in the Command Table next to the game you're trying to install. Once in the appropriate directory, type the Install Command, then press Enter. For example, to install the *Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness* demo:

Type **CD\WAR2** and press Enter

Type **INSTALL.EXE** and press Enter

The demo of *Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness* will then be installed on your PC.

** on chart at right = Must install through Windows.* Return Fire *requires Windows 95.*

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Product Information Number 158

Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness

Company: Blizzard
Tech Support: (714) 955-1481
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Strategy
Required: 486/33; 8MB RAM; 25MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \WARZ\INSTALL.EXE

Since it garnered *PC Gamer* Awards for Game of the Year and Best Multiplayer Game, you can be sure we're excited about letting you take a peek at Blizzard's *Warcraft II*. The folks at Blizzard took all the best suggestions from gamers about their hit title, *Warcraft: Orcs and Humans*, and incorporated them into this new game, which makes its predecessor look like *Pong* by comparison. With a simpler interface, beautiful high-res graphics, and some of the best multiplayer support we've seen, it's sure to become one of your favorites, too.

It's been six years since the destruction of Azeroth at the hands of the orcish army. Having fled to a continent beyond the Great Sea, the human citizens of Azeroth have banded together with both Elves and Dwarves, and now the battle continues as the orcish horde follows them across the waters.

Blizzard did a great job of fleshing out the history surrounding the war between the Orcs and the Humans, but the action supersedes the need for a story. You'll control one side or the other in a war to dominate not only one continent, but the entire world. But, in order to do so, you'll need to be familiar with the game's basic commands.

Control is really simple: Use the mouse to select your units, either by clicking on them directly, or dragging a box around a group of units on the screen. To issue commands, use the buttons on the left side of the screen. For common commands, however, you can simply right-click the mouse, which issues different commands depending on the target. For example, if you have a peon selected, right-clicking on an open spot on the map will make him walk to that location. Right-clicking on a mine will make him mine gold, and clicking on a forest will make him start harvesting lumber. Right-clicking on an enemy unit will make the selected units attack.

It's a nice feeling when you see the enemy on the run and your units razing his town.

There are several things that go into building an impenetrable fortress against your enemies: You'll need to build structures, train troops, and research technologies. To build a structure, select a peon (or peasant), and click on the Build (or Build Advanced) button, then select the structure you'd like to create. If you have enough gold, lumber, or oil, you'll be able to select the site for the new structure, and your peon will start construction.

To train troops, select the appropriate structure (such as a barracks to train soldiers), and click on the button corresponding to the unit you want to train. You may need to build certain structures before some units are available. For example, the Elven Archer will be unavailable until you've built a barracks and a lumber mill.

If you're using Windows 95, be sure to check out the map editor that comes with *Warcraft II*. In the demo version, you won't be able to save or load your edited maps, but you'll get a feel for how easy it is to create whole new worlds with the tools provided by Blizzard.

The key to sea superiority is plenty of battleships. This oil rig doesn't stand a chance.

JUST FOR FUN

Although this demo does not allow the use of the cheats available in the full version, there are some different tricks you can try out. To activate them, press Enter, and type the appropriate code at the message prompt. Be aware, though, that if you're playing a multi-player game, the cheats also give the opposing player the same benefits!

CASH — Gives you lots of gold, lumber, and oil
SHOWMAP — Lets you see the entire map
FASTBUILD — Lets you build and train units in seconds

TECHNICAL NOTE: You can run *Warcraft II* from DOS or from Windows 95. If you have Windows 95, it will load an Autoplay menu, which will also let you run the Scenario Editor (the Autorun. menu will run if you use the Windows 95 button in the *PC Gamer* jukebox). The scenario editor provided by Blizzard is intended for Windows 95, but it is possible to use it in Windows 3.1, as long as you install recent versions of the WinG and Win32s drivers. You can obtain copies and instructions on how to use these programs directly from Microsoft.

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Product Information Number 159

The Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall

Company: Bethesda
Tech Support: (301) 963-2002
Release Date: May
Category: Roleplaying
Required: 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 30MB hard-drive space; Local-bus video card; Mouse
Install: \DAGDEMO\INSTDAG.BAT

Bethesda's *Elder Scrolls: Arena* was one of the best computer roleplaying games ever created. Now, with *The Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall*, they promise to deliver an even better RPG; one that could stand the genre as we know it on its ear.

In *Daggerfall*, you'll be able to completely create your role in the game-world from scratch, choosing not just your race and class, but building your character's background, likes and dislikes, and secret goals. You'll be able to choose from a multitude of player types, classes, and races, too, of course; your alter-ego can be anything you want.

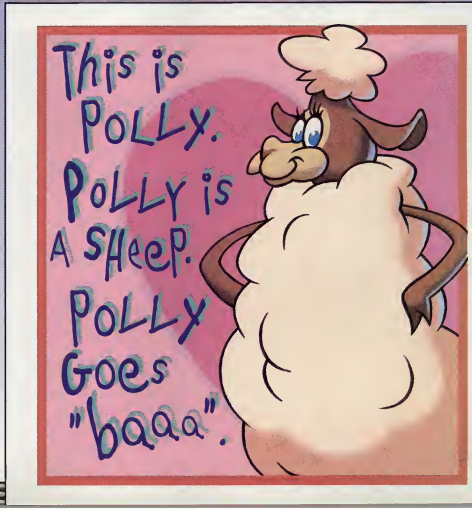
The world in *Daggerfall* will be stunning in its completeness. Bethesda boasts that there will be hundreds of towns and thousands of non-player characters to interact with, and the social structure will be so complex that if, for instance, you should insult a king's guards, the king may very well have nothing to do with you. In this demo, you'll be able to explore a large underground labyrinth, the Pit of Jagadha. Although the dungeon seems huge at first, we're told it's dwarfed by the caverns to be found in the full version of *Daggerfall*.

You control your character with a combination of the mouse and keyboard. Using the arrow keys will make you move forward, backward, and side to side. If you hold down one of the arrow buttons and move the mouse, you'll notice that your view will shift independently of the direction you're moving in. It takes some getting used to, but with this kind of control, you'll be able to look over your shoulder as you walk along passageways, peek around corners, and look up at the ceiling or down at your feet at any time. When you aren't walking, holding the Shift key and moving the mouse will do the same thing. Your interface is the toolbar at the bottom of the screen. Take a look at the diagram below to see exactly what each button does. Also, there are plenty of hot-key shortcuts available in this demo — for details, click on the Hot Keys button from the main menu.

Since Bethesda had to fit a huge demo in a small space, you will explore the dungeon with a pre-created character, but you'll still be able to take a look at the host of other features *Daggerfall* will contain. You can go through the steps of creating your own personalized character by clicking Create Character at the main menu. But sure to check out some of the other things you can do in this demo, such as creating your own custom spells, potions, and magical items. You can't save your creations in the demo version, but you can get a good idea of the process behind it.

TECHNICAL NOTE: If you only have 8MB of RAM on your machine, your SmartDrive cache might use too much of your precious memory. The demo will automatically load SmartDrive when you start, but if you don't have enough memory to run the game, simply delete the line in DAGGER.BAT that says "smartdrv /x 32 32 /q."

Casting spells such as this fireball is the only way to survive the Pit of Jagadha.



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Once you've put together the first pot and lid, you can entice the entity out of the fireplace and into its prison.

Shivers

Company: Sierra
Tech Support: (206) 644-4373
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Puzzle
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 1MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: \SHIVERS\SETUP.EXE

Every town has one. The old, abandoned house everyone talks about in hushed voices. Neighbors swear they see strange lights and hear spooky sounds. Children walk quickly past with an eye over their shoulder, expecting a ghoul to jump out and eat them . And, of course, the older kids dare each other to enter, explore, or possibly even spend the night. *Shivers* is the story of one such house — a museum, really — and the teenager who was dared to stay the evening in its dark depths.

You, of course, play the unfortunate teen. The demo starts after you've wandered through the place a bit, and you've discovered the office. You can listen to journal recordings left by the strange Dr. Windlenot. You'll need to capture strange beings, the Ixupi, in their specialized containers (if you want to see what one looks like, examine the fireplace).

Here's how the interface works: Below the main screen, you'll see a strange, curved device. The blue line down the center is your life essence — when that's gone, you can guess what'll happen. The button on the far right (the one that looks like a marble) will present you with the options menu, where you can save and load games. The eyeball will provide a close-up view of something in your inventory. Your inventory is the object on the far left side of the toolbar; you can only carry one thing at a time. Movement is accomplished with the mouse — simply point and click in the direction you want to travel. Your goal is to collect a pot and lid to contain each Ixupi. You'll have to keep one of the two items in a safe place until you can find the other and put them together. To capture an Ixupi, select the completed pot in inventory and click it on the Ixupi while it's still a green mist, before it can coalesce and attack you. You'll have to be quick, or you'll lose precious life-essence.

Rayman

Company: Ubi Soft
Tech Support: (800) 824-7638
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Arcade
Required: 486/33; 4MB RAM; SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: \RAYMAN\RAYMAN.EXE

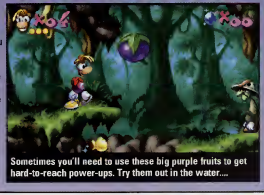
If you thought you'd never see a good platform action game without buying one of those new-fangled 3D video cards, don't despair. *Rayman* shows that you don't need a whole lot of video power — or even Windows 95 — to have a great-looking, smooth-moving arcade hit.

Rayman isn't heavy in story — your job is to rescue your small friends from cages and gather crystal spheres while knocking the enemy out of the picture. You control Rayman with the cursor keys: the up arrow looks up, the down arrow ducks, and the side keys move Rayman from side to side. To jump, hit the Alt key. To fire off your deadly fist, press the Control key. The longer you hold the key down, the farther your fist will fly. Although you can use the keyboard, we've found that using a gamepad greatly enhances the gameplay.

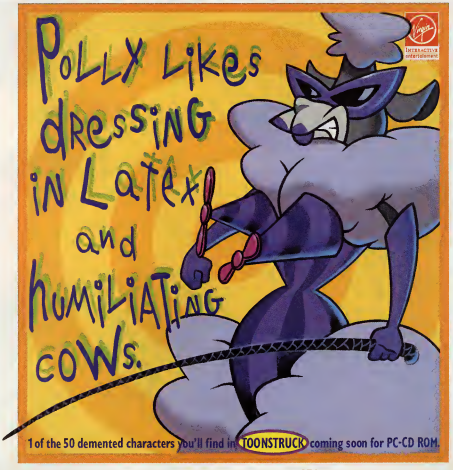
As you move through the single world provided in this one-level demo, you'll find plenty of power-ups that increase the amount of damage you can take or give you extra lives. You'll need them if you want to make it to the end. But don't think that just because these items exist, they'll be easy to find — they won't. There's all sorts of tricks to using Rayman's capabilities to the fullest, and we expect you to figure them out.

HINT

Right at the beginning of the level, there's an extra life. You'll need to knock down the first giant fruit you see, and punch it over to the far left of the screen. Once it's bouncing in place, jump up on it, and time the bounces so you can jump up onto the hand. After you land on the hand, jump over to the right and onto the ledge, and it'll lead you to the first of many prizes.



Sometimes you'll need to use these big purple fruits to get hard-to-reach power-ups. Try them out in the water....



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SimIsle

Company: Maxis
Tech Support: (510) 927-3905
Release Date: Available Now
Category: System Simulation
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \SIMISLE.BAT

Buckle on your galoshes and prepare to slough through the rain forest in Maxis' latest software toy, *SimIsle*.

Using specialized agents as your hands and feet, you'll be able to build an island empire in mere minutes. Using resources from coal mines to local unskilled labor in fishing villages, you'll need to plan ahead and think wisely about your next move before your scenario is successfully completed.

Welcome to your island. It may not look like much now, but you'll soon fix that!

The demo will give you full access to the first scenario — Tutorial Island. In the beginning, there's a lot to learn, so we suggest that you print out the README.TXT file that is installed onto your hard-drive (in the \SIMISLE subdirectory) and follow the steps to begin your empire. Keep in mind, however, that the instructions in the tutorial are only suggestions. You can do whatever you like — it's your island.

The interface is mouse-controlled. Check out the diagram above for a description of the options. You'll send your agents around the island — an easy shortcut is to right-click on the portrait of the agent you want to move, and then click on the place you'd like to put him or her. You'll need the varied skills of your agents to build, so make sure you know what their specialties are.

You'll start out with plenty of money, but that won't last long if you don't start bringing in profits. As you explore, you'll come across a feline species long thought to be extinct. A simple fence and amenities to bring in some tourism, and trade is established. A manager for your animal preserve will need college training, so you'll have to figure out a way to put a college in the small fishing town you start off in. There are plenty of tougher tasks ahead of you, which will demonstrate the variety possible in the full version of the game.

NOTE: In the tutorial, we've found that when it leads you to build a lumber yard, you'll have to specify that you want to keep the lumber local. If you don't, the lumber will automatically be shipped out, and you won't have enough wood products to create the new structures you'll need.

Earthworm Jim

Company: Playmates Interactive Entertainment
Tech Support: (714) 562-1720
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 6MB hard-disk space; VGA
Install: \EWJDEMO\INSTALL.BAT

What happens when a super-enhanced, indestructible alien spacesuit lands on a simple earthworm? The worm becomes a superhero, of course. It may sound unlikely, but that's the premise for *Earthworm Jim*, the arcade hit that started on 16-bit gaming systems and is now coming to the PC.

You'll control Jim through several levels of intense annelid action. There'll be pitfalls and unexpected obstacles everywhere along the way, from mud-covered pigs to umbrella-wielding old ladies. You'll need to use your noggin as well as your fingers in a combination of skill and fast reflexes if you want to prevail in the quest to save Princess What's-Her-Name (yes, that's her real name) from the evil Psy-Crow.

You'll need to use the keyboard or a gamepad to get the earthworm with an attitude to the princess. Players with a gamepad have a marked advantage, but keyboard players can refer to the control keys listed below for guidance. Keep in mind that the same key or button will perform different actions, depending on what Jim is doing at the time. For example, pressing the jump key while Jim is in midair will make him spin his head like a helicopter, slowing his descent.

This demo will let you try out a few levels of the final product. You'll have three different levels from the first game to conquer before moving on to one of the levels from the second game. Each level will pose its own challenges and obstacles, so be prepared for variety. *Earthworm Jim* is full of surprises.

One of the first challenges you'll face is getting past this first room. You'll have to use your head as a whip to grab these knobs and swing your way up.

Control Keys for Player 1 and Player 2

Alt — Fire your plasma blaster, or any other weapon you get. Also acts as an accelerator for your rocket.	Alt — Fires the current weapon indicated in the lower left corner of the screen. When airborne, activates the Snott parachute.
Shift — Does the head Whip, and the "Hamster Bite" (you'll find out...), along with the bungee shove. Activates shields during the rocket flights.	Shift — Makes Jim whip with his head.
Ctrl — Makes Jim jump, or when airborne, turns Jim's head into a rapidly rotating helicopter blade.	Ctrl — Makes Jim Jump, and activates Snott when airborne.
	Tab — Cycles through all of Jim's currently held weapons.

Powerslave

Company: Playmates Interactive Entertainment
Tech Support: (714) 562-1720
Release Date: Available Now
Category: First-person shooter
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 12MB hard-drive space; VGA
Install: \PSFREE\INSTALL.BAT

The Egyptian city of Karnak used to be so peaceful. Now it contains undead mummies, antisocial flying spiders, and dog-faced humans with an attitude. To battle the chaos that's spreading out from the city, you've been chosen as a one-man task force to infiltrate and destroy the desecrators who are hell-bent on reviving the long-dead carcass of King Ramses. After a frightful fall from a helicopter that burst into flames with you in it, you've landed deep in the pits of the ancient city. Armed with only a long knife, you'll need speed and your wits to survive the threat of ghostly apparitions, and some not-so-ghostly throwbacks from "Stargate."

Like a lot of first-person shooters, you can play with the keyboard, mouse, or joystick. You move forward and back with the up and down arrow keys, fire with the Control key, and strafe with the Alt key. Use the Shift key to run, and to look up or down, press Page Up or Page Down. Jump with the A key, and crouch with the Z key. Note that you can crouch down and enter small tunnels to find treasure.

If you have the luck to fall into a refreshing pond of water, watch out for the piranha. You can move up and down in the water with the A and Z keys. Look for clusters of air bubbles for a refreshing gulp of oxygen. We recommend that in the underwater scenes, you avoid the fish. They're rather unfriendly, and you'll waste valuable time trying to fight them. You get out of the water by moving as far up as you can. Then you can move to the side and pull yourself out.

When you start the game, you'll have only your trusty knife. You can quickly find the pistol, conveniently located past the first enemy. You'll need to use it against the red spiders that come jumping at you. They're quick, but you can take them out with a couple of shots. Just don't let them land on your head — they'll give you more than just a headache. Also, keep an eye out for plants with red berries on them — they'll give you small doses of healing that will add up when you find enough of them.

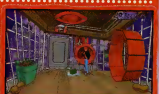
There's plenty of water to frolic in among the ruins of *Powerslave*. Just make sure they're not too thick with piranha before taking a swim.

HINT

Getting far in the first level can be difficult, especially if you don't realize that the burning pots can lead you to bigger and better places with a few simple shots from your gun. They'll blow up, leaving either a hidden chamber, or a passageway to the next area.

HINT

Getting the flying space rodents off your tail can be a hazardous job. However, you'll need their machinery to open the door to the cage you're stuck in. Follow the steps below to deal with the hamster menace.



The first thing you'll need to do to get rid of the alien rodents will be to create a distraction. Use your phazer on the grasshopper cube to set the green jumpers free on the ground level.

It may sound like suicide, but you'll have to wake up the flying hamsters and get them to follow you all the way down to the bottom level. Be quick, or you'll be rodent dinner.

Once you get to the ground floor, hide behind the big wheel to avoid any stray laser blasts.

Once the smoke clears, you'll be able to see the results of your distraction. That big, moving piece of equipment will help you get out of here, but you'll need a few things to make it work.

Orion Burger

Company: Sanctuary Woods
Tech Support: (303) 339-7114
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Graphic Adventure
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 8MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse
Install: \ORIDN\INSTALL.BAT

Sanctuary Woods has once again delved into the graphic adventure arena, and this time they've come up with an entertaining title featuring cartoon-quality graphics and puzzle-based gameplay. *Orion Burger* pits you against Zlarg and his sidekick Flumix, two alien fast-food entrepreneurs who've come to Earth to harvest our precious proteins. Of course, they have to prove that humans aren't an intelligent species before they can start production, and they've chosen Wilbur to take their tests. It's up to you to lead Wilbur through a series of puzzles and save all of mankind from becoming alien munchies.

This demo will give you a chance to work through one of the many tests in the full version. Zlarg shrinks you to the size of a mouse, and you'll have to get out of your own hamster cage. It may sound easy, but it's not! Especially when you consider that the hamsters in the cage with you aren't really hamsters at all! It'll take some clever thinking to get your way out of this one, but to make things a bit easier for you, check out the hint box to get past the first major puzzle.

The interface is completely mouse-driven. Simply left-click where you want Wilbur to go, and if the cursor changes into an arrow, he'll exit the screen in that direction. To use your inventory, simply click on an item, then click on whatever you want to use it on. If you die in this demo, you'll see a unique feature that Sanctuary Woods put in the game. Instead of having you reload your game incessantly, Wilbur is caught in a time warp. When he dies, he returns to the scene, his memory intact, to try another course. It may not be much different than reloading, but at least the *characters* remember what happened before!

TECHNICAL NOTE: This demo requires a lot of extended memory. Make sure SmartDrive isn't loaded. You can take care of that by typing REM in front of the SMARTDRV line in your AUTOEXEC.BAT file.

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Product Information Number 109

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FREE DEMO

THE HIVE™

Product Information Number 170

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Bad Mojo

Company: Pulse Entertainment
Tech Support: *http://www.badmojo.com*
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Graphic Adventure
Required: 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: \MOJO\DEMO2\BMDEMO.EXE

If you've ever wondered what the life of a cockroach must be like, you're about to find out. When Roger Samms, a mild-mannered entomologist from San Francisco, decides to steal a million-dollar grant for his continuing research into cockroaches, he gets magically transformed into the very creature he used to study. Falling to the basement of the run-down apartment building that is his home, it's your job to lead him, in cockroach form, through myriad challenges, from sticky insect strips to hungry spiders.

This demo will give you a quick glimpse into the dark and gruesome world of Roger's apartment building. The detailed graphics are not for the squeamish, so be prepared for some rather revolting scenes. Even in full-color, high-resolution rendering, dead rats aren't a pretty picture. You'll control Roger's roach form with the cursor keys. Turn him with the right and left arrows, and the up arrow will make him go forward. If you need to move an item you encounter, you'll do so by simply walking into it.

HINT

The single puzzle in this demo is one of the simplest in the game, yet still tricky to get right. You'll need to manipulate the cigarette to save yourself from the hungry spider, but you'll have to be quick and efficient to succeed. After that, head on over to the roach motel.

The full game features more than 700 detailed images, some even more grotesque than the ones in this demo. It will also have full-motion video interspersed throughout, continuing the story and delving deeper into the heart of Roger Samms. It's a journey that only the stout of heart and strong of stomach may endure.

Ugh. It's true what they say: there isn't anything pretty about a dead rat.

AH3 Thunderstrike Air Assault

Company: JVC
Tech Support:
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action
Required: 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 1MB hard-drive space; VGA
Install: \AH3\INSTALL.BAT

Prepare to immerse yourself in a world where you control an arsenal of death. You'll fly on two missions in this demo, both with different objectives. But one objective stays the same: destroy the enemy. Don't be lured into a false sense of security by the explosions of their vehicles, either — you'll have to come back again to take out the soldiers who escaped you the first time around.

In the demo, you control your chopper with the keyboard; the full version will let you use your joystick or even your mouse. To fly your helicopter, take a look at the control keys listed below. The full version of the game will have loads of features not active in our demo, including the ability to save your campaigns, change the weapons loadout on your chopper, and fly in eight separate campaigns with varying objectives.

Control Keys

Increase Altitude	Q
Decrease Altitude	A
Change Weapons	W
Change Target	S
Look Left	Z
Look Right	X
Fire	Ctrl
Fly Forward	↑
Fly Backward	↓
Slide Left	←
Slide Right	→
Rotate Left	Alt + ←
Rotate Right	Alt + →

SHIVERS™

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SIERRA

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http://www.holobyte.com
Spectrum HoloByte
Product Information Number 162

Gearheads

Company: Phillips Interactive Media
Tech Support: (800) 340-7888
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 3MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Windows 3.1
Install: \GEARHEAD\SETUP.EXE

The player on the left may be close to winning, but in order to take the game, you have to win by two points.

If you thought you'd played every possible game with your old toys from childhood, be prepared for a new and exciting use for them. Pitting yourself against the computer or a friend, you'll race to score 21 points before the other player. How do you score points? By getting toys over the other guy's goal-line. It may sound like toy football, but there's more to this than tackling or blocking the opposing team.

You start with three toys that perform different actions. Each one will help you get a toy across the line, but be warned that some can be used against you. For example, a chattering skull is a great way to make the other player's toys turn and run away, but if you send one of your toys at it — even from behind — it will turn and run, possibly causing you grief when you score a point for the other player.

You select which toy you want to launch with the left and right arrow keys. You can chose a departure point with the up and down arrow key. To set it on its way, press the right Control key. The longer you wait before letting the toy go, the more power it will have — the timer shown next to your toy box will tell you how much strength a toy has.

In the full version of *Gearheads*, you'll have twelve different toys to create your own toy box from. In this demo, you'll be able to try out five of the toys. The computer will randomly select three of the five for your box at the start of each game, so you'll have to play a couple of times to fully experience the variety of toys available.

There's plenty of strategy to this one, so don't get daunted at first. Just keeping playing away!

Return Fire

Company: Time Warner Interactive
Tech Support: (800) 565-8944
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Action
Required: Windows 95; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 11MB hard-drive space; local-bus video card
Install: \FIRE\RFIRE.EXE

You may have played Capture the Flag when you were a kid, but you've never played it like this. Using tanks, helicopters, and even jeeps, this is Capture the Flag that's just short of war. You'll need to do reconnaissance to find the enemy's flag, then clear out the guards that block your way — and then you'll need a quick jeep to get you in and out. Just like in the kids' game, the first one to capture the enemy flag and bring it back to his home base wins the game. It won't be easy, since even if you play with another player, there are computerized drones everywhere that will attack you incessantly, so you'll need to dodge missiles and grenades if you want to become the victor in this unique battle.

Win95

You control your units via keyboard or joystick. We recommend a gamepad, but if you prefer to use the keyboard, take a look at the control keys below to help yourself out. Not all of them are listed, so you may want to read and even print out the keyboard list you'll find in the demo's Help menu after you start the game.

This demo takes a lot of horsepower to run smoothly. If you're having problems, make sure you're playing in the lower resolution graphics mode. You can toggle between the two by pressing Alt-1 for high-res and Alt-2 for low-res. You can choose to play in a window or full screen; just hit F4 to switch back and forth.

Control Keys

Move Forward	W	Move Backward	S
Turn Left	A	Ground Fire/Grenade	H
Turn Right	D	Air Fire	J
		Switch Weapons/Drop Mine	K

NOTE: Use the W, S, A, and D keys to choose a vehicle when in the bunker, and H to select it. You can also view the map by hitting J.

SHIVERS™

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SIERRA

TEEN
AGES 13+

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Product Information Number 81

He may look small, but James Burke has a lot of big things to say.

Connections

Company: Discovery Channel Multimedia
Tech Support: (800) 780-6044
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Graphic Adventure
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; SVGA; Windows 3.1
Install: \CONNECT\CONNECT.EXE

James Burke is probably best known for his television series, "Connections," shown on the Discovery Channel. Now, not only is it an informative television show, but it's an instructive computer game.

The game's scenario centers on the same idea as the TV series: the sometimes strange connections that lead from one concept to the next — for instance, the steps that brought us from the lowly pencil to the fax machine. As you explore different areas of the game, you'll find objects that might seem rather insignificant at first, but will lead you to another object, which leads to another, and so on. The majority of the game is played through puzzles — you'll need to figure out the archeologist's match puzzle before she'll share any of her tea, for example. Don't be surprised if you find strange things in the world of *Connections*. The flow of time is messed up, so you're likely to find things strangely out of place with their surroundings.

HINT

Since the video clips about the individual items are disabled in this demo, you might have difficulty figuring out what to do with the slip of paper you find tucked away in the dresser drawer. The key to the puzzle is wrapping it around the pole in the center of the tent. Read the word that's exposed, and remember it — you'll need it later on.

In the full version, not only will you be able to explore your surroundings endlessly, you'll also be able to watch small video clips taken from the TV show. James Burke himself will also appear periodically, helping you along the way and suggesting a course of action. Listen to him carefully, because he'll give you a lot of clues.

Battle Arena Toshindin

Company: Playmates Interactive Entertainment
Tech Support: (714) 562-1720
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Fighting
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 6MB hard-drive space; SVGA
Install: TSDEMONSTALL.BAT

If you liked *FX Fighter*, you'll love Playmates' newest fighting thriller, *Battle Arena Toshindin*. It's got some dazzling 3D graphics, as well as some killer moves.

In the demo, you'll be able to play three of the eight characters that appear in the full version: Eiji, Sofia, and Mondo. Each has special abilities, and special weapons to go with them. Eiji's sword is quick and smooth, but watch out for Sofia's whip. And, if you're too near Mondo's spear, you're sure to feel its sharp point. You have the option of playing against the computer or against another gamer at the same computer. Both players can share the keyboard, or one can use the keyboard while the other uses a joystick. Actually, we recommend a gamepad, since they seem to work best for fighting games.

The demo runs at two graphics resolutions, one for fast computers and the other for slower machines. Don't bother trying the high-res mode if you don't have a Pentium — the demo detects the speed of your computer and forces low-res mode. If you plan to use a gamepad or joystick, make sure you add "-j" to the command line when you run the demo (you'll type "TSD -J" at the DOS prompt to start the game).

And don't forget these control keys:

Move	Player 1 (left)	Player 2 (right)
Left	A	J
Right	D	L
Up	W	I
Down	S	K
L. Slash	R	P
H. Slash	T	[
L. Kick	F	;
H. Kick	G	'

Eiji does the Superior Dance after his sword makes short work of his opponent, Sofia. The demo lets you play as both characters.

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-tgeorge111@aol.com

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Product Information Number 156

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You Don't Know Jack

Company: Berkeley Systems
Tech Support: (510) 549-2300
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Trivia Game
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 10MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Windows 3.1 or higher
Install: \JACK\SETUP.EXE

The categories in *You Don't Know Jack* range from mildly funny to downright hilarious.

Berkeley Systems has finally found a cure for those Saturday night blues that hit when you and a few friends sit around wondering what to do when you've seen all the movies in the theaters and those spirited baseball-bat fights have lost their magic. Now, if you have a computer running Windows 3.1 or Windows 95, you can play *You Don't Know Jack*, probably the most entertaining trivia game ever made for the PC. You can play with as many as three people in a normal game, or if you're having a party, you can choose a tournament mode. In this demo, you'll be able to try your hand at just a few of the questions you'll see in the full version.

Playing the game couldn't be simpler: It's much like a game show. You select a category by hitting the corresponding number key, a question is asked, and the person who buzzes in first with the right answer wins the round. Player One's buzzer is the Q key, Player Two's is B, and Player three's is P. Once you've buzzed in, you hit the number of the answer you think is right. The winner selects the next category.

The full version of *You Don't Know Jack* contains more than 800 questions. The battles will be fast and furious, especially in the Jack Attack round. If you're a fan of trivia or you're looking for a game to play with friends, give it a try!

TECHNICAL NOTE: *You Don't Know Jack* will automatically detect whether you are running Windows 3.1 or Windows 95, but make sure you run the demo from the correct button on the jukebox, or the game will not run after installing.

Renegade 2

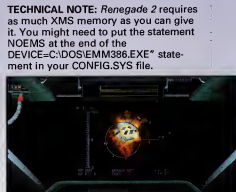
Company: SSI
Tech Support: (408) 737-6850
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Space Combat
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 19MB hard-drive space; VGA; Mouse
Install: \RENEGADE\INSTALL.EXE

Once again, SSI brings us a space combat game to challenge the ever-reigning *Wing Commander* and *TIE Fighter*. The sequel to their first space sim, *Renegade 2: Return to Jacob's Star* promises to be even bigger and better than its predecessor.

The game features super-looking high-resolution graphics, but it doesn't require a Pentium-class machine to run smoothly. The combat is fast and furious, and with a multitude of commands to give your wingmen, you'll find there's a strategic element, too. In the full version, you'll be able to to designate wingmen and their ships, choose your own ship to pilot, and take part in a multitude of activities besides just flying in space and blowing up the enemy ships.

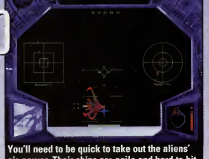
To fly your space bird, there's only a few commands you'll need to know. You'll have to manipulate the output of your onboard power plant. Hit the + or - keys to raise or lower the output. Be careful: even though you can get output to 200% of normal, if you raise it too high, you might blow some conduits and reduce your overall abilities. To target your enemies, hit T. The Spacebar will fire your weapons, and if you hit H, you'll switch between single and massed fire of your laser cannons. If things start getting a little too rough, press Shift-X to eject. The entire list of possible commands in is the KEYMAP.TXT file. The demo will let you experience the excitement of a single space combat mission. Destroy all the enemy ships in the area, and you'll be praised as a hero.

TECHNICAL NOTE: *Renegade 2* requires as much XMS memory as you can give it. You might need to put the statement NOEMS at the end of the DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE" statement in your CONFIG.SYS file.


A well-placed shot could mean a stellar explosion. This fighter won't be bothering anyone anymore.

Absolute Zero

Company: Domark
Tech Support: (415) 513-8933
Release Date: Available Now
Category: Space Combat
Required: 486; 8MB RAM; 24MB hard-drive space; VGA; Mouse
Install:


You'll need to be quick to take out the aliens' air-power. Their ships are agile and hard to hit.

When miners on Europa, one of Jupiter's four major moons, discover a large opening at its core, they awaken an alien species that has lain dormant for thousands of years. Understandably grumpy after their long sleep, the aliens retaliate and destroy one of the three cities of the moon when they blast out from the center of the ice-covered sphere. Now it's war, and the only weapons humans have are modified mining tools.

Absolute Zero puts you behind the wheel, flight yoke, or turret gun of several different vehicles in a series of fast-paced missions. Since one person doesn't win a war, you'll play different characters as they take part in the battle against the aliens. In this demo, you'll be able to try on the roles of a turret gunner on a mission to rescue some trapped miners, and a fighter jockey investigating the alien forces. Either way, you'll have to follow the commands you see scrolling across the top of the screen, and keep you fingers ready on the fire button.

TECHNICAL NOTE: If you have only 8MB of RAM, *Absolute Zero* will run better with the SmartDrive disk cache loaded. If it does not load on boot-up, simply type "SMARTDRV" at the DOS prompt. To fly your ship, you'll need to use the keyboard. Check out the README.TXT file copied to your hard-drive in the \AZDEMO subdirectory for the keys you'll need to use.

HINT

The enemy will come at you hard and fast. However, if you fire your guns too much, they'll heat up and won't fire again until they cool down. To keep the ammo flying at the aliens, you can switch to another weapon by hitting the W key.

Treasure Quest

Company: Sirius
Tech Support: (602) 951-8405
Release Date: March
Category: Puzzle Game
Required: 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; 1MB RAM; VLB Video with 32,768 colors
Install: \SIRIUS\SETUP.EXE

Sirius Publishing Inc., best known for their *5-ft. 10-Pak* CD-ROM compilations, has put a twist on multimedia puzzle games. Their new title, *Treasure Quest*, not only features Terry Farrell (Jadzia Dax on "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine") as a host, but there's a $1,000,000 prize for the first person who solves the game!

This demo is merely a trailer for the finished product, which will be released at 12:14 a.m. on March 22, 1996. According to Sirius, *Treasure Quest* is so convoluted that even the release date may be a clue. You'll need to look into the real world as well as the material on the CD-ROM to find clues to the puzzles that may earn the tremendous prize.

The idea for *Treasure Quest* came from a book published in England about 15 years ago. The book, "Masquerade," sold more than a million copies and spawned the most publicized treasure hunt in history. Could *Treasure Quest* repeat the phenomenon? Check it out and decide for yourself.

EXCLUSIVE CLUE

Because of our dedication to our readers, we sold our souls to Sirius to get this exclusive clue to the *Treasure Quest* hunt for you. Pictured above is a typical scene from the full version. Looking at Equation 2 (Yes-1), you have to solve it in an elementry manner. "Yes -1" is "Ye." Since it's multiplied by two, you'll need to use "Ye" twice in the final solution. This is part of the quote solving the mystery of the bedroom. To finish *Treasure Quest*, you'll need to complete quotes in nine other rooms to solve the game's secret and win $1,000,000.

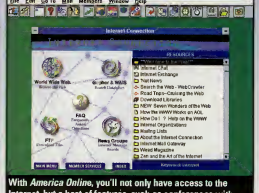
America Online

Tech Support: (800) 827-3338
Required: 386/33; 4MB RAM; 4MB hard-drive space; VGA; Windows 3.1 or higher; Modem
Install: \AOL\SETUP.EXE

One of the leaders of online services, *America Online* offers a complete array of utilities to get you speeding down the Information Superhighway. You'll be able to send E-mail all over the world; participate in live conferences with celebrities and leaders of the scientific community; and get access to a world of files to download, people to chat with, and information to enrich your life, from the latest football scores to stock market reports.

Packaged along with *The CD*, you'll find an account number and password that'll let you try out *AOL*. By simply installing the software and typing in the account number and password, you'll get ten hours and your first month's worth of service free. After that, your rates will be only $9.95 a month, which includes five free hours (each additional hour costs $2.95). Check it out — you'll be amazed at what you can find with a simple click of your mouse.

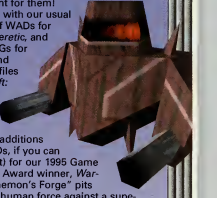
NOTE: Netscape Navigator is now available for AOL users. Once you sign on, go to Keyword "Netscape" to find out how to use the program.



With *America Online*, you'll not only have access to the Internet, but a host of features, such as conferences with movie stars and other celebrities, that only *AOL* can give you.

Add-Ons and Patches

Ah, Spring is here, and what better way to appreciate it than by playing your favorite games with new levels? We've tracked down several great additions to any player's Easter basket, and you didn't even have to hunt for them!



Along with our usual selection of WADs for *Doom II*, *Heretic*, and *Hexen*; HOGs for *Descent*; and savegame files for *Warcraft: Orcs and Humans*, we've located some new additions (called PUDs, if you can believe that) for our 1995 Game of the Year Award winner, *Warcraft II*. "Daemon's Forge" pits your small human force against a superior Orcish army, while FIRST.PUD is a quick-and-dirty multi-player game.

Of course, we've also included all the patches mentioned in Tom's Extended Play column in the /PATCHES sub-directory. If you're not sure how to use the patches or add-ons, make sure you read the README.TXT files in the appropriate sub-directory on *The CD*.

"Daemon's Forge," one of our add-ons for *Warcraft II*, challenges your resources as the human player against superior Orcish forces.

If Nothing Works...

We cannot provide technical support for problems you may encounter with the demos on *The CD*. Should your copy fail to run at all, with error messages that indicate your CD-ROM drive cannot read the disc, return it to the following address for replacement: *PC Gamer, The April CD Disc, 2.3 Replacement, 150 North Hill Drive, Suite 40, Brisbane, CA 94005*. Please indicate any error message you receive.

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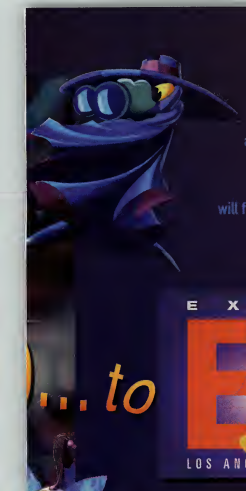
Product Information Number 172



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will fly you and a guest to Los Angeles for the **biggest show** in the gaming industry,

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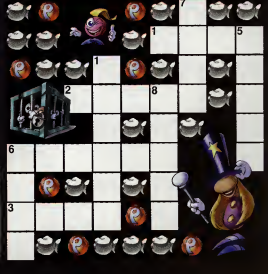
Once you've solved the puzzle, tear it out along with the registration card, and MAIL USING YOUR OWN ENVELOPE BEFORE APRIL 20, 1996 TO THE ADDRESS LISTED BELOW.

IF YOU DIDN'T RECEIVE A DEMO OR NEED ANOTHER ONE, JUST CALL 1-800-UBI-SOFT! GOOD LUCK!

Contest Rules: 1. No Purchase Necessary: To enter, mail the completed puzzle and questionnaire in your own envelope to: **Ubi Soft E3 Extravaganza, 80 East Sir Francis Drake Blvd., Ste. 3E, Larkspur, CA 94939.** No purchase or payment of any money is necessary to enter. One entry per household. All entries must be handwritten. Mechanically reproduced entries will not be accepted. Entries must be received by April 24, 1996. All entries become exclusive property of Ubi Soft Entertainment and will not be acknowledged or returned. One prize winner will be notified by phone. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received. Sweepstakes open to residents of United States and Canada only. Void in Rhode Island and Quebec. Winners shall sign an affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance within 7 days of notification or they will forfeit prize. For more information call: 1-800-UBI-SOFT. 1995 Ubi Soft Entertainment. All Rights Reserved. All other trademarks are property of their respective holders. Must be 18 years or older to win.

RAYMAN Demo Questions

1. All this outrageous action takes place in this setting.
2. You do this to make the valuable purple fruit fall.
3. There is an extra one of these hidden on the platform above the wooden hand.
4. What piece of gold do you get if you float on the purple fruit?
5. How many hidden cages are in this demo?
6. (down) Rayman will scream if you _____ too far over the side of the platform.
6. (across) When you press the X button on your keyboard, what is it that Rayman sticks out to scare the taller guards?
7. What kind of slimy animals do you have to dodge when you are climbing the pink and purple vines?
8. Go to the Ubi Soft web site to learn the game's _____ codes. (http://www.ubisoft.com)

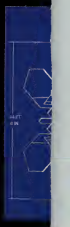


Name Age Date

Address

Phone Magazine

RESERVED.



THEY'RE BEING BUILT TO DESTROY COUNTRIES THAT DON'T EVEN EXIST YET.

X-31A GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS

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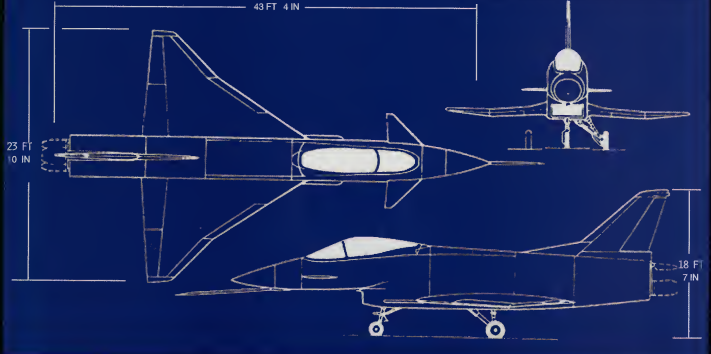
POWERPLANT	GE F404-GE-400 turbofan
CREW	ONE
ARMAMENT	20mm Vulcan Cannons



ARM E7

55

IF YOU'RE BEING DETECTED IS YOUR THING, CLIMB ABOARD THE B-2 STEALTH BOMBER. IT TOOK AN ARMY OF ENGINEERS TO MAKE YOU INVISIBLE TO ENEMY RADAR. AND WE GOT ALL THE SPECS.

57

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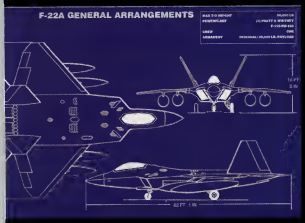

23

60

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78

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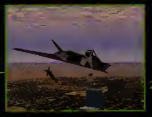
ROUTE

645

30

57

ARM 10



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Product Information Number 110

SCOOP!

EXCLUSIVE! BEHIND-THE-SCENES OF THE HOTTEST GAMES

Diablo

It's a devil of a roleplaying game

Blizzard puts their talent to the test, as they create an innovative RPG that's deep enough for hard-core dungeon masters, but accessible enough for the *Doom* crowd.

—*Todd Vaughn*

Blizzard's first foray into the RPG genre has plenty of fast-action gameplay, but doesn't cut corners on depth.

F.Y.I. FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Diablo
Developer: Condor/Blizzard
Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment, 19840 Pioneer Ave., Torrance, CA 90503 (310) 793-0600
Projected Price: $59.95
Percentage Complete: 80%

In a nutshell:

***Diablo* is an ambitious roleplaying game that attempts to blend classic RPG elements and cutting-edge technology in order to create an accessible, attractive, and challenging adventure for the masses.**

What's so special?

Blizzard's reputation for making fun games is almost reason enough to crave *Diablo*, but the attention to detail in the game is the real star. Multi-player features, random level generation, and action-oriented gameplay coupled with a solid adventure make it a must-see.

Why should I care?

Aside from truly amazing graphics, *Diablo* offers a free-form multi-player format that lets you engage in true party-based adventures, complete with bitter rivalries, cooperative play, and cut-throat competition.

And when's it coming out?

May 1996

If you happened to catch last month's *PC Gamer* Awards issue, you probably noticed that one category — Best Roleplaying Game — failed to yield a winner from the staff. It wasn't that there weren't enough games to choose from (*Thunderscape*, *Anvil of Dawn*, *Entomorph*, etc.), it's just that there weren't very many really *good* ones, and none were exceptional enough to earn an award. But if the Game of the Year award-winners at Blizzard have their way, things could look entirely different on the RPG front when the ballots go out for 1996.

In conjunction with California-based developer Condor, Blizzard is planning to launch their first roleplaying game — *Diablo* — in mid-1996, and hopefully revitalize the genre with the same sense of style, playability, and infectious fun that made us vote *Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness* the best game of the year.

We had the chance to meet with the folks at Blizzard and take a long look at *Diablo*, and just like with our first glimpse at *Warcraft II*, the excitement and enthusiasm from the Blizzard team about their new project was very noticeable.

Now, at this point, you're probably wondering why Blizzard would take a chance on an RPG, when a game like *Warcraft III* (which has not been announced, by the way) would seem a more natural course of action. Blizzard's senior producer, Bill Roper, explains that while the overwhelming success of *Warcraft* and *Warcraft II* is a dream come true for the small company, they don't want to be known just for their real-time strategy games and have been eager to expand into new territories.

With their sights set on something truly different, Blizzard began investigating the possibilities of doing a fantasy roleplaying game. That's when the relationship with Condor was forged, Roper says.

With its advanced 3D-modeled environment, Diablo delivers a graphic style that's as entertaining to look at as it is to play.

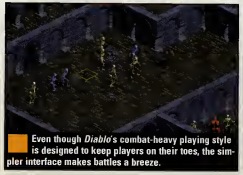
"Condor came to us with the idea for *Diablo* and said 'It's like *Rogue* (an early UNIX-based RPG) meets *Crusader: No Remorse* meets *Doom*,'" he says. "From there, we said, 'You've piqued our interest, let's see what you've got.' And once we saw the design documents, we just had to go with it."

Like most RPGs, *Diablo* starts with a fantasy story line that finds your character dropped into a mysterious labyrinth filled with hideous creatures, non-player characters, and quests galore. Throughout the game, you attempt to locate and destroy an insidious evil that lurks deep within the bowels of the earth. While the story — drawn from many classic RPGs — is pretty standard fare, Condor and Blizzard are certain that *Diablo* will be far from a typical RPG.

The most noticeable difference is that *Diablo* doesn't look very much like an RPG. Instead of the first-person perspective that most people associate with a modern dungeon-crawler, *Diablo* uses a three-quarter, top-down perspective like Origin's *Crusader: No Remorse* or MicroProse's *X-COM*, and has a simple and effective interface for movement control, inventory access, and spell-casting casting, using either the mouse or keyboard. Add to that some lush SVGA graphics, 3D-modeled characters, hand-drawn animations, and real-time lighting effects, and you'll begin to wonder if

Megademon: These custodians of evil roam the depths of the labyrinth waiting to feast on travelers.

In *Diablo*, you'll do battle with magic or a selection of weapons but when facing large numbers like these, a hasty retreat doesn't sound too bad either.



Even though *Diablo*'s combat-heavy playing style is designed to keep players on their toes, the simpler interface makes battles a breeze.

If gruesome sights such as these make you squeamish, be warned, *Diablo* isn't going to be the sort of game that takes the warm-and-fuzzy route.

Diablo wouldn't be better suited as an action game. But once you've gotten past the graphics and simple interface and take the time to examine the extensive list of features that will be incorporated into the design, *Diablo* begins to grip you like nothing you've seen before.

One of these innovative features that's sure to excite both die-hard RPG fans and novices alike is a random level-generation system that not only creates new maps and creatures each time you play, but that places new items, non-player characters, and even plot elements into the game as well. Roper explains the reasoning behind this: "One difficulty in creating a roleplaying game is, no matter how good the game is, once you've gone through it — even if it's been a fantastic gaming experience — you probably won't ever play it again. Level one is always level one. But using our random level-generation system in *Diablo*, once you've played through the entire game, you can pop back out and change character types and races, then begin exploring a completely new game with all-new rooms and quests. While you'll be directed through the game to the same endgame, the way you go about getting there, and the people and items you encounter, will be entirely different each time you play."

These random levels are generated by drawing upon a huge database of events, character dialogs, and items, which lets the computer place a wide variety of elements into each new map it creates, then tailor them to create a fulfilling adventure each time out.

Aside from the extensive amount of gameplay available with random level-generation, the inclusion of multi-player support for local-area network, modem and Internet play, helps separate *Diablo* even further from the competition. At press time, the number of players Blizzard said would be able to participate in *Diablo* will be limited to four, in order to keep the play balanced enough to be enjoyable for all.

The prospect of a true multi-player RPG offers gamers exciting new avenues of exploration and interaction and adds new dimensions to what for years (outside of a few online games), has been a distinctly solitary experience. Gamers can form parties of different races and character types to explore *Diablo*'s strange environs using their own unique skills and puzzle-solving abilities to progress. In this multi-player setting, you can even choose to go off on your own to explore the labyrinth — but you may not want to wander too far, because in keeping with their theme of playability and consistency, Roper says that the level-generator will take into account the number of players in the game and add puzzles that require cooperation from each of the players in order to progress.

Diablo's other important breakthrough is its simple interface. Consider it a cross between the simplicity of *Doom* and the depth of a classic RPG. Moving your character is as simple as using the cursor keys, and by using a "smart" inventory system, you'll be able to react quickly during the real-time combat, casting spells and changing weapons with ease. Not only is the interface extremely intuitive and easy to use, you won't have to do without the wealth of character information that most hard-core roleplaying gamers expect.

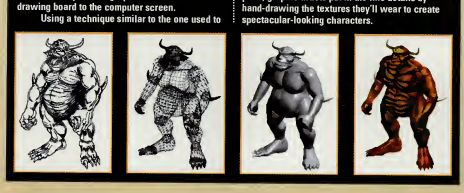
Great, you say — but how well does all this really come together? In a word, fantastic. After spending just a few brief hours with *Diablo* you really get a sense that this is going to be something huge. Not only will *Diablo* offer hard-core players the depth of stats and replayability that they demand, but with its impressive graphic look and simple interface, it'll give new players a hands-on, action-oriented approach that will let them see what a good RPG is all about. While it's a little early to hand out 1996 RPG awards just yet — especially with Bethesda's *Daggerfall* and Sir-Tech's *Star Trail: Shadows Over Riva* due later in the year, *Diablo* certainly has the inside track to become one of the best RPGs of 1996.

PCG

DIABLO'S DEMON HORDE

To truly appreciate the bizarre menagerie of monsters, non-player characters, and player characters that populate *Diablo*'s sinister world, you'll probably have to wait until the game hits the shelves later in the year, but here's a sneak peek at how the impressive graphics make it from the drawing board to the computer screen.

Using a technique similar to the one used to render those meticulously-detailed orcs and humans in *Warcraft II*, these incredibly detailed three-dimensional characters are first created on the drawing board, and then modeled using a 3D wire-frame skeleton. Once the framework is complete, graphic artists put in the fine details by hand-drawing the textures they'll wear to create spectacular-looking characters.



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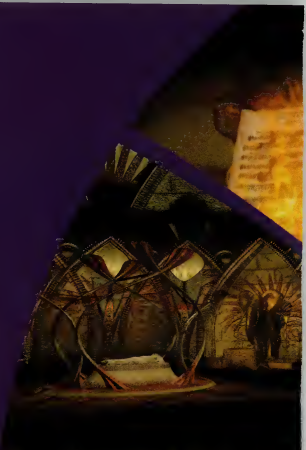

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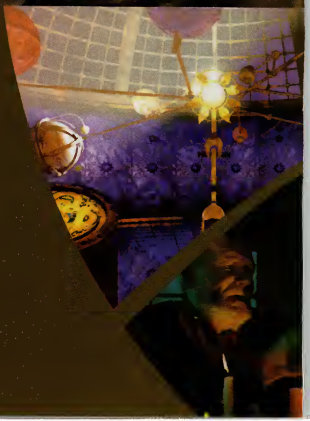

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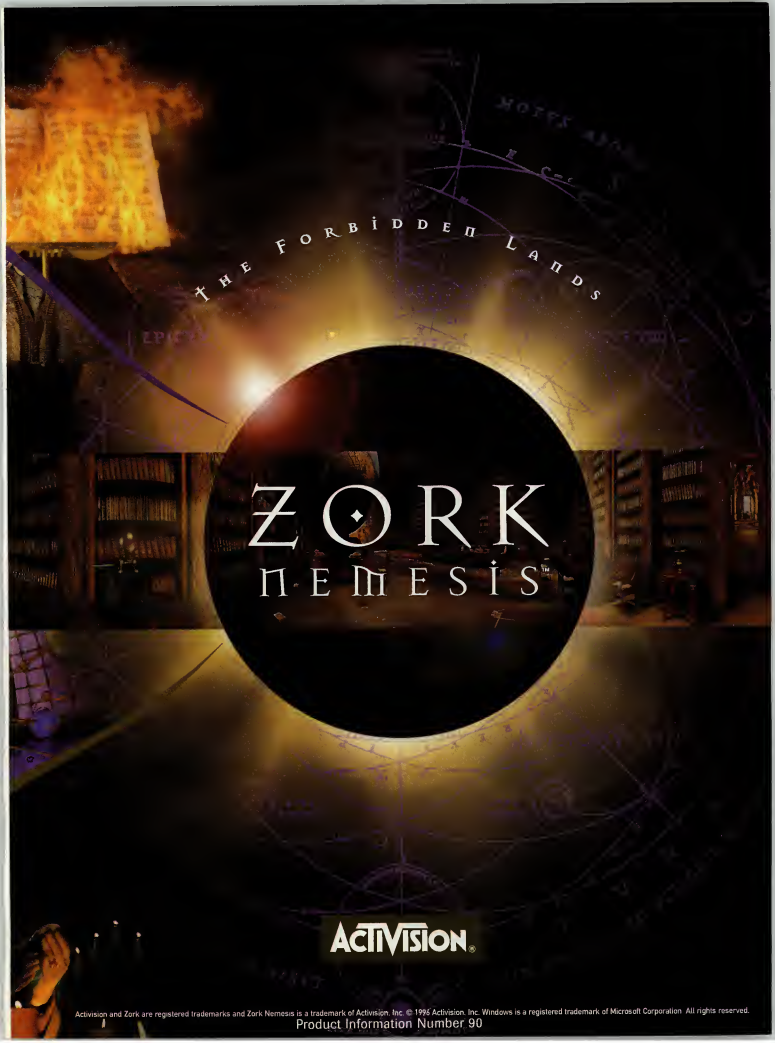

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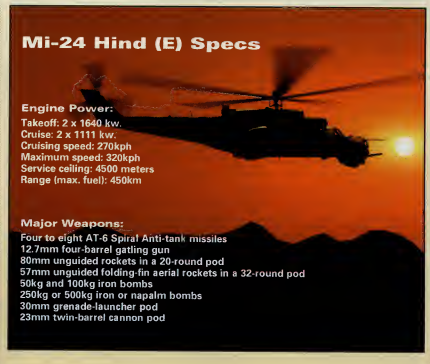
Product Information Number 90

Hind

Pass the vodka, comrade — *Hind* is coming!

Get ready for the world's first realistic Red Army attack chopper simulation, based on the award-winning design of *Apache*.

—Jason Bates



FYI
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Hind
Developer: Digital Integration
Publisher: Interactive Magic, P.O. Box 13491 Research Triangle Park, NC 27709 (919) 461-0722
Projected Price: $59.95
Percentage Complete: 80%

In a nutshell:

Interactive Magic's *Apache* is the best helicopter sim on the market, and its sequel will use the same design, almost guaranteeing a good game. But this is not just *Apache* with Russian insignia: authenticity pervades, from the flight model to the mission doctrine.

What's so special?

Real-world missions, painstaking accuracy in the flight mathematics, and the ability to go head to head against *Apache* owners promises to make *Hind* exceptional.

Why should I care?

Like *X-Wing* and *Tie Fighter*, these two titles should complement each other nicely, with the sequel being a fresh, different approach to an excellent game engine.

And when's it coming out?

May 1996

Apache may be the best helicopter sim yet: it scored an Editors' Choice rating when we reviewed it, and it earned our award for the Best Simulation for 1995; no mean feat in a year that brought us *EF2000*, *Flight Unlimited*, and *IndyCar II*. But even before all this roaring success, Interactive Magic knew they had a great design on their hands, and were hard at work on its sequel — *Hind*.

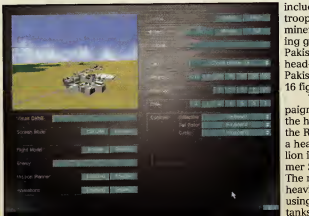
But Russian choppers are a whole different ballgame — where American helicopters are sophisticated, high-tech computerized war machines, their Russian counterparts tend to be simple, flying platforms crammed with guns, missiles, and even soldiers (Soviet doctrine keeps troops aboard almost all of their helicopters, including dedicated weapons platforms like the Hind).

The Soviets tend to send their choppers out in teams of three, with one helicopter hanging above the others and back from the battlefield, directing fire. One reason for this team formation is that each helicopter carries only a limited number of anti-tank missiles; they must be used sparingly.

The design team has incorporated this unfamiliar military doctrine into *Hind* — you definitely can't call this game *Apache 2*. Instead, the player will engage in missions that were not practical in *Apache*; primarily inserting, covering, and retrieving ground troops.

Along these lines, the player will have objectives that involve not just attacking enemy targets but holding ground as well, operations that cannot be done without close coordination with land forces. And with the Hind's limited missile payload, the player will be challenged to conserve his tank-killing ammo and be forced to use his other weapons more often.

Apache's missions took place in historical or potential real-world con-



As in *Apache, Hind's* menus remain simple and attractive.

flicts, and the same will be true for *Hind*. The Korean campaign occurs as the North invades the South — and it is on this battlefield, included in *Apache*, that head-to-head play between two gamers running the two different games will take place.

Hind's Afghanistan campaign occurs in 1985, at the height of the Russian invasion. Flying Hinds against determined and well-armed *mujaheddin* guerrillas, the player will be forced to attack these elusive infantry targets equipped with machine guns, SAMs, and RPGs in broken terrain — a challenge for any helicopter pilot. Missions include escorting troop columns, laying minefields, and bombing guerrilla bases in Pakistan — and going head-to-head with Pakistani Air Force F-16 fighters.

The third campaign is drawn from the headlines, pitting the Red Army against a heavily armed rebellion in one of the former Soviet Republics. The republic's army is heavily equipped, using Hinds, T-72 tanks, and worse.

Like the missions in *Apache*, these campaigns will teach you the step-by-step fundamentals of managing a helicopter in flight — one of the most difficult types of aircraft to control, on both computers and in real life.

Technically, the game will simulate the actual flying of the MI-24 Hind(E) as closely as possible, given today's computer technology and the available information on Soviet helicopters. This will be the most challenging aspect of the game, and die-hard simmers will not be disappointed. You'll have to grapple with power, pitch,

Be sure not to roll that Hind! Although powerful, the Hind lacks the agility of its American counterpart, the Apache.

An Interview with "Wild Bill" Stealey

Chairman of Interactive Magic

PCG: Is *Hind* the first Russian helicopter sim?

Stealey: It's the first real sim. I think *Werewolf* was much more of an arcade game — they made it into an action game, and there's nothing wrong with that. But this is a real sim. We really went out and got all the things the Hind did, we got in all the weapon systems, the 12.7 four-barrel rotating cannon, and so on. We really know a lot about the Hind.

PCG: What is the history of the Hind?

Stealey: It came from the MI-8 Hip, which was a Russian troop carrier, and they really just kept improving the engines, putting in a little avionics, slapping on this gun and that gun. Their design philosophy is different from the American design philosophy; they believe if you've got something that works, why mess with it?

The first MI-8 Hips were actually finished some time in the late 50s, early 60s, and they just kept upengining it, and every once in a while they'd find some cool gun or some cool missile to put on. It wasn't until the early 70s that they actually took the old transport cockpit off of it and put the two bubble cockpits on — that makes it what we call a BUFF — a Big Ugly Fat Fella.

PCG: Where did you get your information on the Hind?

Stealey: There are three Hinds here in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and we were able to get a couple of guys to come up and talk to us about them. A couple of the guys that helped us with the *Apache* project also in their Army careers had the chance to both inspect and fly the Hind helicopter. And Digital Integration has access to a Hind in England, that somehow the English government got their hands on. In fact, they're now in the process of going over to Russia and taking a ride in the Hind, to make sure they got the flight model right. Although certainly the *mathematical* flight model is right, they want to make sure that it *feels* right, too.

PCG: How is *Hind* different from *Apache*?

Stealey: They've changed the missions to show what the real missions with the Hind would be. The missions are going to be different enough that it's going to provide a whole new gaming experience.

They also fly differently. If you've already got some experience flying the Apache, you're gonna be a little ahead of the game, but it's going to take a little more effort to fly the Hind, because it's a much bigger handful. The Apache is a little sleek sports car; the Hind is a big eighteen-wheeler out there with big guns all over it. The Apache can roll, the Hind can not. There was a a famous story of a Hind watching an Apache roll at one of the air shows, and the Hind tried it and ended up on the deck in little pieces. But it carries so much firepower and troops.

PCG: Were you already planning on simulating the Hind when you made *Apache*?

Stealey: No, we did not. What spurred this was when these guys [at Digital Integration] realized they had access to this Hind, and they compared it to the Apache, and they said "this is cool." Because this is the big ugly fella that was going to go take on the Apache. Everybody was scared when this helicopter first came up; it sounds terrible and was full of guns, and I think that's why the Apache started coming out so quickly. In fact, this MI-8 was armed way before we had the Apache. So when Digital Integration saw the comparisons, they said what we ought to do is cover the other side of this story.

Cockpit Comparison

The cockpit views from inside *Hind* (left) and *Apache (right)*. More old-fashioned, analog gauges and fewer electronics distinguish the Russian helicopter from the American bird.

"These guys [at Digital Integration] realized they had access to the Hind, and they compared it to the Apache, and they said 'this is cool.' Because this is the big ugly fella that is going to go take on the Apache."

— *"Wild Bill" Stealey*, Interactive Magic chairman

blade speed, and all the real difficulties that go into flying a real chopper.

But gamers who just want a simple shoot 'em up, or need a quick, action-packed break from the more detailed mode will be happy to find that *Hind* will have the same kind of arcade mode that helped *Apache* appeal to such a broad range of PC pilots — it tosses you into the cockpit and starts shooting at you immediately, giving you all the action but without the micromanagement of the more realistic modes.

Visually, the game promises to be richer than *Apache*; the graphics engine has been improved to allow more detailed texture-mapping of the terrain without a big performance loss. They've also added more visually pleasing explosions.

The designers promise to use English voices with Russian accents to represent your side, and the menu screens use a quasi-Cyrillic lettering to help lend a Russian feel to the game.

The modem missions are very flexible, allowing two players to fly as pilot and gunner on single missions, as lead and wingman in two choppers, or head-to-head in glorious battle. The multi-player mode supports 2-16 gamers on a network. And, unlike in *Apache*, the multi-player action will be more than just a dogfight; not only will you have to fly around and destroy your opponent's aircraft, you'll need to take on the tasks that attack helicopters were meant for — attacking and defending territory — bringing a lot more strategy to the table and creating a more realistic combat environment.

In an era of seemingly endless sequels that add little more than new levels to an existing game engine, it is nice to see someone offer something truly different.

PCG

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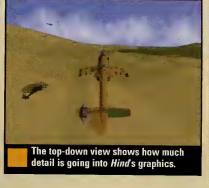

The top-down view shows how much detail is going into *Hind*'s graphics.

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PC CD ROM

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Product Information Number 161

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Product Information Number 150

http://www.badmojo.com

Z

The high-powered action and gorgeous cinematic cutscenes of *Z* will blow you away.

Finally, a Game That Blows Up Real Good!

Virgin's latest title is a high-powered bang with all the fast-paced action that gamers can handle — plus a little strategy thrown in for good measure.

—*Steve Poole*

Any object in *Z* can be blown up, including rock formations and boulders — and if it's big enough, the debris can destroy vehicles and troops when it comes back down.

FYI — FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Game: Z
Developer: The Bitmap Brothers
Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment, 18061 Fitch Avenue, Irvine, CA 92714 (714) 833-8710
Percent Complete: 80%

In a nutshell:

Z is a real-time combat game with a goal that couldn't be much simpler: Destroy the enemy's fort or kill all of his troops.

What's so special?

One of the biggest gripes gamers have with wargames is with the AI: Either the computer can do things you can't, or your troops don't behave in a realistic manner. Thanks to *Z*'s design — which eliminates construction and resource-management by placing all resources on the battlefield at the start of the game — there is no way for the computer to cheat. And if you tell your troops to do something, they'll do it in a realistic manner.

Why should I care?

Z offers all the high-powered bang any action gamer could want, but is filled with tactical and strategic nuances that give it a surprising amount of depth.

And when's it coming out?

May 1996

When the guys at *PCG* called and asked if I'd like to do a Scoop! on *Z*, my first question was "What the hell is a *Z*?"

"A real-time combat game," was the answer, "sort of like *Command & Conquer*, but faster-paced."

I still wasn't sure if I wanted the assignment — until I found out it was being developed by the Bitmap Brothers. You see, the Bitmap Brothers developed a game for the Genesis and PC called *Speedball 2*, sort of a cross between hockey and rollerball that's about as fast-paced as they come. It's one of the few Genesis games I still play regularly, and I was intrigued to find out just what kind of wargame the Bitmap Brothers would come up with.

And it didn't take long to find out the answer: "Wargames should be about blowing things up," says Eric Matthews, lead designer on *Z*, and after getting a close-up look at the game in action, I could see the Bitmap Brothers had placed a premium on destruction.

"With a lot of strategy games, you have to sit down and read the manual," Matthews said, "then when you start playing, you spend more time building units and managing your resources than you do fighting. With *Z*, we wanted to provide continual conflict from very early in the game."

And it's hard to imagine getting into battle any faster than you do in *Z*. At its heart, *Z* is basically a variation on Capture the Flag — but with enough pyrotechnics going on to satisfy all but the most jaded action fan. The game takes place in the future, in an unspecified part of the galaxy; some nasty aliens have invaded five of your planets, and you've been given complete control of the military forces responsible for sending them packing. Each battlefield is set up in similar fashion, with a Red fort on one side (that's you in a single-player game) and a Blue fort on the other side, controlled either by the computer or a human opponent (*Z* supports modem and network play). The goal is straightforward enough: Capture the enemy's fort or kill all of his troops.

Each of the five planets where battles occur has a different kind of terrain. On this planet, for instance, you'll have to take into account impassable rivers of lava when you decide on a plan of attack.

Between missions you'll get to know Brad and Allan, two slackers who always seem to come out of a mess smelling like roses.

General Zod doesn't like defeat, and he'll let you know it in a heartbeat.

If you like your battles chock-full of nasty explosions and huge fireballs, then *Z* could be just what you've been looking for.

Controlling your forces couldn't be much simpler, either; to give orders to a unit, just click on the unit and then on its destination. To give the same orders to more than one unit, you can click and drag a box around the desired group, and then issue the command. And, unlike games such as *Warcraft II* or *Command & Conquer*, there's no waiting around while you build structures and train troops. Everything you'll be working with, from factories to vehicles, is scattered about the battlefield at the start, just waiting for you — or the enemy — to seize it.

If it sounds simple in theory, the truth is that *Z* has many strategic subtleties that you can only learn through playing. The battlefields are divided into zones, some of which are home to factories; take control of one of these zones, and the factory will automatically start producing the simplest types of hardware and troops to add to your forces.

But there's more. Each factory is rated on a scale of one to five; the higher the rating, the greater the number of things it can produce. Each unit requires a certain amount of time to build — it takes longer to pump out a heavy tank than a squad of grunts — but the more zones you control, the less time it takes to build units. To top it all off, a factory that's captured by the enemy will continue production for the other side, even if there's only a few seconds left until construction is completed — and factories or bridges that have been destroyed can be repaired.

Now you're faced with a lot of decisions: Do you crank out mediocre units at a fast pace, or take the time to build fewer but more powerful vehicles? Should you sacrifice ground troops to seize territories and thus speed up production, or devote your energies to safeguarding your factories? If the enemy is about to seize one of your factories, do you rush forces over to protect it, or do you blow it up to keep it out of their hands, and hope to repair it later?

The action in *Z* can be described in one word: intense. As your units engage the enemy, you hear them screaming stuff like "We're under attack!" and "Do something!" along with a few saltier expletives ("These guys are soldiers," Matthews explains — "What do you *expect* them to say?"). Huge fireballs erupt when vehicles are destroyed, sending debris skyward — and if a hunk of twisted metal or rock is big enough, it can destroy any unit unfortunate enough to be sitting where it lands. While the interface is simple, keeping track of your troops in the larger battles can be a frantic affair; fortunately, new weapons and vehicles are gradually introduced as you work your way through the game, giving you a chance to get acquainted with controlling your forces instead of trying to keep track of all the stuff you can build.

But all this would be for nothing if the game didn't work right; Matthews says that's why much of the four years spent developing *Z* was dedicated to the game's AI routines.

"We spent two years working on unit-to-unit conflict alone, because we wanted the robots to carry out their orders just like real troops would — to act in a reasonable manner," he says. "If you send some troops out to guard a pass, and they walk past an abandoned weapon, they should pick it up without you having to tell them to do it. When a tank sees that it's being fired upon, the guys driving it should be smart enough to try and take cover or begin evasive maneuvers. Having your troops 'do the right thing' makes the game more realistic, and it gives you more time to concentrate on the big picture."

Perhaps the best thing about *Z*'s design, though, is that it forces you to be aggressive. The only way to win is to seize territory, and while there are, of course, opportunities to go on the defensive, the only way you're going to win is to take ground and kill the enemy.

Evaluating your performance is General Zod, a cigar-chomping hardass who sounds more than a little like Buzzcut on "Beavis and Butt-head" and who's not above whipping out an automatic and mowing down any enemy survivors scrambling to escape. There are roughly 40 cinematic cut scenes featuring Zod and Brad and Allan, two slacker soldiers with a taste for Rocket Fuel brew and a propensity for mayhem. To make sure these scenes keep up with the hellacious pace of the battles, they're often accompanied by some head-bangin' speed-metal riffs — it all feels very much like a segment from the animated movie, "Heavy Metal" — and most of the sequences are so funny that you won't hit "Escape" to bypass them.

Both VGA and SVGA graphics are supported, and on an adequate system — a 486/66 with local-bus video, according to Matthews — the game should run at the same speed in either mode.

Every designer wants to create a game that's "easy to learn, yet difficult to master." With *Z*, that's just what the Bitmap Brothers have done. Look for it this May — whether you're an action hound or thoughtful strategist, I guarantee you won't be disappointed.

—CG

Capturing and holding factories is essential to victory in *Z*. The timer in front of the building tells you how long it'll be before it rolls out a new unit.

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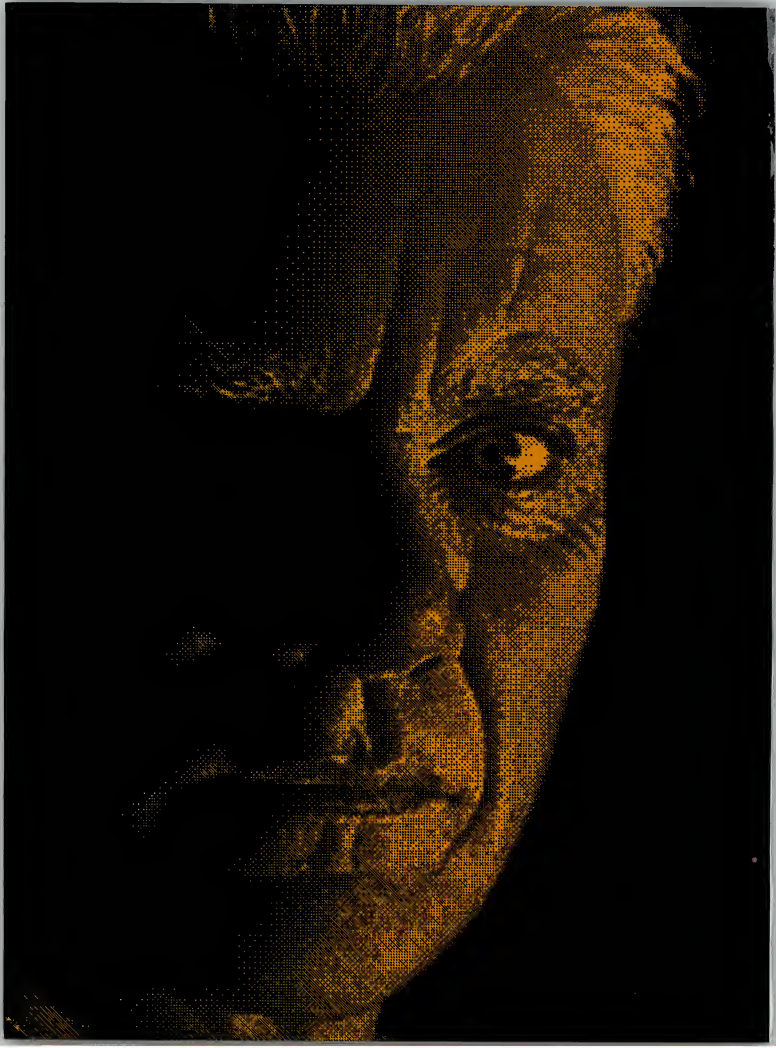

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Product Information Number 144

PHILIPS

A Visit to Krondor

Fantasy Novelist Raymond Feist returns to PC gaming

7th Level's new fantasy title, *Return to Krondor*, isn't going to be just another fantasy roleplaying game. It's a sequel to one of the most popular RPGs of recent times, Sierra's *Betrayal at Krondor*, which for a long time had no sequel, or even the promise of one. It's also based on the books of Raymond Feist, their wealth of detail drawn from a pen-and-paper RPG campaign that Feist and his friends have worked on for 20 years, right down to the world's plate tectonics and five-mile scaled hex maps.

Return to Krondor revolves around the efforts to recover the Tear of the Gods, a powerful artifact of the Ishapian Church. The players will control their characters in a real-time 3D combat environment, enjoying ship-to-ship battles and undersea exploration. The game will be native to Windows 95.

Raymond Feist has long been interested in both computer and traditional RPGs, and takes a great deal of interest in their production. Raymond Feist recently took time out from his busy schedule to speak with *PC Gamer* about the upcoming game, his books, and more.

PCG: When in the chronology of Midkemia does this new game take place?
RF: *Return to Krondor* picks up a couple of years after *Betrayal at Krondor*. The games so far are slotted to occur between [the novels] *A Darkness at Sethanon* and *Prince of the Blood*. The reason for that is it's a long period, nineteen years or so, and it allows us to do things with some of my more popular characters, without putting tremendous constraints upon what we can and can't do.

PCG: Which characters will be in this game?
RF: In the first game, James, Locklear, and Pug were the characters, and in this game there'll be a little bit with James and William, Pug's son.

I think it's going to be fun. The thing I like about this game — which is the same as in *Betrayal* — is that the stories read like good books, and we're probably going to be talking to one or two publishers in the next year or so about novelizing these out. There's people out there who want more Feist stuff, but they're not gamers. And if you break down *Betrayal at Krondor* and run it as a literary narrative, it actually works very well as a nice, nine-chapter book.

PCG: How would you describe the game?
RF: We've never used the term "interactive novel," but effectively that's what these games are. I've created these characters, and myself and the boys and girls at 7th Level are creating a story which in many respects is structured like a novel. But what's different is we're putting you in a position of saying, "Feist has written a story up to here, and I have to decide what to do next." We've allowed a certain amount of room for intentional stupidity; you know, if you're absolutely hell-bent on having James attack Prince Arutha in Chapter One, you can do it, but the results will be very predictable.

The fearsome dragons of *Krondor* will soon be winging their way onto your PC.

PCG: How much input have you had on the story?
RF: Quite a bit. I'm not writing it — I don't have the time — but I am following the design docs. The guy who's writing it is named Bill Maxwell.

PCG: How did this game get from Sierra to 7th Level?
RF: The short version — of a very long and involved story — was that Dynamix and Sierra decided not to exercise their option to do a second game, after the first game shipped. Which was DK — if you don't love us, we'll find somebody else, if you'll let us buy out the option. It was a very amicable parting of the ways. So we contractually arranged to revert rights.

And then the CD-ROM version of *Betrayal* shipped, and went crazy, at which point I was in the enviable position of having lots and lots of people who wanted to talk to me, and they did. I talked to everybody, including Dynamix and Sierra again. I wasn't averse to going back to work with them.

But 7th Level made the strongest pitch; they came in with the best package of things in terms of the kinds of projects we wanted to work with down the road, because this is just the first of several.

PCG: What is the new story about?
RF: There was an element in the story that we had initially developed for Dynamix, a story called Thief of Dreams. And while most of the material for Thief of Dreams had been produced by Dynamix employees, some of the concept stuff had been produced by me.

There were a couple of elements in there that I was really

••••••• *Continued on Page 52* •••••••

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

As more and more large entertainment companies get into multimedia CD-ROMS, eager to provide content to the growing number of first-time PC users, we are seeing an ever-increasing amount of titles based on popular books, films, and television shows.

While we'll have wait until 1997 to get a crack at Fox Interactive's *Planet of the Apes* title, *Hellraiser* will be out toward the end of this summer. Based on the gloriously gory Cliver Barker films, *Hellraiser* features a real-time, 3D environment in which to flee from the evil Pinhead.

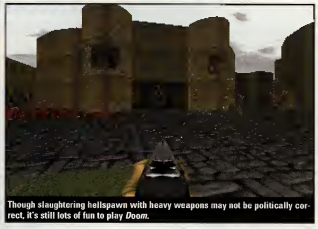
Hellraiser, coming in the third quarter of 1996, is from Magnet Interactive.

7th Level may be best known for their hilarious *Monty Python's Complete Waste of Time*; Python fans will be delighted to hear that in the works is a *Monty Python's Quest for the Holy Grail* title. If it's half as funny as the film, it'll be worth the wait.

Betrayal at Antara

Although they lost the license to the story material of *Betrayal at Krondor*, Sierra still has the highly-praised game's basic engine, and they're planning a fresh series of computer roleplaying games in a newly-created game world, the Antaran Empire. The three main characters in the games — Aren, William, and

Continued on page 54



Though slaughtering hellspawn with heavy weapons may not be politically correct, it's still lots of fun to play *Doom*.

Wizards of id

More *Hexen*, *Doom*, and *Heretic*

There's a flood of new products from id software, and although unfortunately none of them is *Quake*, they're still worth a look. Here's the roundup, to help you sort it all out.

Everyone's favorite demon hunt, *Doom*, has been out for quite a long time, in PC game terms, so id has finally decided to finish it off once and for all. *The Final Doom* contains two complete replacement adventures for *Doom II*, titled *TNT: Evilution* and *The Plutonia Experiment*. Both of these adventures are complete thirty-two level replacements for the original Doom2.wad, and they were both written by people who presented their WADs to id. Of course, everyone knows there are thousands of WAD files out there for the taking, and so does id — so you can be sure they were really impressed with the ones they chose. Moreover, the new levels tell a continuous story and provide an ever-increasing challenge through thirty-two levels, rather than just being a bunch of single levels slapped onto a CD.

The story for these additional episodes is suitably grim, if familiar: experimental gates opened by the careless UAC corporation have allowed demon hordes to invade our dimension, again. A text story we saw that accompanied the beta included such inspiring lines as: "Meat machines flailed their armored limbs and slavered with bloodlust, seeking soft, bleeding manflesh to rend." (Well, it's as good as anything in the *Doom* novels.)

Besides *The Final Doom*, versions of *Doom* and *Hexen* optimized for Windows 95 are now out or on the way; these are in no way different from the original games, other than being redesigned for the Windows 95 platform.

Now you will be able to set multi-player mode and run WAD files from a point-and-click interface, bringing much relief to those who fear the DOS prompt.

The full version of *Heretic* has never been released in retail stores until now; *Heretic: Shadow of the Serpent Riders* is the complete game, with two new episodes thrown in for good luck, making a total of 45 levels to destroy.

Hexen: Deathkings of the Dark Citadel is a completely new adventure for *Hexen* fans, but you will have to own the previous version in order to make use of it. You will be forced to journey through a blasted wilderness until you find the ancient ruin that holds, sunken beneath its depths, the Dark Citadel. Only after you have defeated the Death Kings will you be allowed to return to your own world, your quest, at last, complete.

The Dark Citadel has also been adjusted to support multi-player modes of up to eight players, so you will be able to put even more of your trusting friends to the sword.

A Visit to Krondor

Contined from Page 51

was attracted to, one of which was the notion of what the religions of Midkemia are like and what the politics of the temples are. The game we're doing now concerns an ancient artifact and the effect it has on the religion and politics of the kingdom. While that's not a direct set of tasks for the player, it's the background story.

PCG: Will there be other *Krondor* games after this one?

RF: Yes, unless this game goes absolutely belly-up, and 7th Level says, "Feist go away, you're a curse." So, yeah, we're already working on elements of the third game. Some of the things we're doing in the second game are actually foreshadowing the third game. Partially, the character of the Crawler comes back in the third game.

We're trying to expand that Midkemian game universe in every product. For example, in this game you'll see a lot more of Krondor than in the first game.

Here's your first look at *Krondor* in years, with its new interface created by 7th Level.

PCG: How do the games differ?

RF: Everything that was under the hood of *Betrayal at Krondor* was proprietary. There's going to be dramatic differences. What you're going to see is going to be different from what you've seen before. What you're going to see is a very, very dramatic improvement in the art. Part of it is, as you may know, 7th Level has their own authoring tools, a proprietary system known as "Top Gun." Top Gun allows you to do certain things on the fly with rendering, that most other game companies do not have.

We're trying to get you a playable game that will move at a decent speed, which is one of the reasons we chose to go with Windows 95 exclusively.

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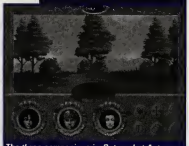
Product Information Number 105

Continued from page 32

Kaelyn — band together in classic high-fantasy fashion: following a shipwreck and an attack by mysterious flying monsters, Aren aids William, and they in turn aid Kaelyn, forming an adventuring party.



The three companions in *Betrayal at Antara* advance into Sierra's new fantasy world.

Lighthouse

Sierra is also putting together *Lighthouse*, a graphic adventure puzzler in the *Myst* tradition. Drawn into an alternate dimension, the player must

Continued on page 55

New Book Collects Old Friends

Sam and Max laugh it up in classic adventures

One of the most popular LucasArts titles of all time — and one of the best games of 1993 — was *Sam & Max Hit the Road*, a cartoon adventure based on the underground comics of Steve Purcell.

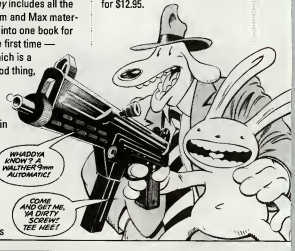
Sam & Max: Surfin' the Highway gathers all the Sam and Max material in one book for the first time.

Sam is a canine detective, in the mold of Sam Spade, and his sidekick, Max, is a dangerously hyperactive rabbit — together, they form the funniest pair of "Freelance Police" ever to hit the PC.

In the game, Sam and Max are called upon to investigate the disappearance of Bruno, a gigantic Bigfoot who has escaped from the local carnival. In the course of their many rollicking adventures, they end up visiting such exotic locales as the Mystery Vortex and The World's Largest Ball of Twine.

Now a complete run of Sam & Max comics have been collected and published in a soft-cover book. *Sam & Max: Surfin' the Highway* includes all the Sam and Max material into one book for the first time — which is a good thing, since many of the original comics were available only in limited editions of several hundred. Inside, you will find such classic adventures as Sam and Max's visit to the tattoo parlor and their attempt to rid the moon of giant cockroaches.

For fans of the original game who have always craved more, but could never find the comics, this hilarious, irreverent book offers a rare treat. *Sam & Max: Surfin' the Highway* is available from Marlowe & Company for $12.95.



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More Worlds to Conquer

Westwood sends in reinforcements for *C&C*

With half a million copies sold, *Command & Conquer* is one of the most popular real-time strategy games available, and the demand for more missions has been intense. Westwood has delivered, with two new expansions discs that will satisfy even the most hard-core *C&C* addicts.

Red Alert brings new blood to the battle, including action that takes place during winter.

Red Alert, a new expansion disc for *C&C*, should be available by the time you read this. *Red Alert*'s plot begins to tell the story of the *C&C* universe; the events of *Red Alert* take place before those in the original game, with an alternate history from our own universe. In the *C&C* universe, World War Two never happened, because Hitler never came to power. Instead, war broke out between the Western powers and Stalin's Soviet Union. Characters such as Albert Einstein and Irwin Rommel appear in the story line, as our own history is entertainingly rebuilt.

As the player, you may portray either side, similar to the GDI/Nod sides of the original game. The maps are twice as large as *C&C*'s, with enhanced network play allowing up to six players. And even if you don't have network access, you can still load up a multi-player game in solo mode, battling up to five computer opponents on a single map. Unit control is enhanced, too, with the ability to send troops to waypoints along a path to a final destination, giving you more control over the exact route they will take.

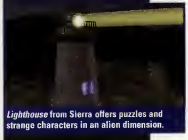
There are plenty of new units in *Red Alert*, including spies, medics, attack dogs, chemical bombs, and a whole host of naval units: cruisers, bombers, submarines and destroyers. With the added naval dimension and the ability to control your path of attack, *Red Alert* adds even more playability to an already great title.

Another recent expansion disc for *Command & Conquer* is *Command & Conquer: The Covert Operations*. With fifteen new solo missions and ten new multi-player maps, *Covert Operations* offers plenty of work for the experienced *C&C* player. The solo missions include eight for the Brotherhood of Nod and seven for the GDI. And unlike the original, players may choose the sequence in which they play the missions.

Both *Red Alert* and *Covert Operations* require the original *C&C* game, and they're available through Virgin.

Continued from page 54

solve strange puzzles, deal with unusual characters, and operate alien machinery in order to complete the adventure. *Lighthouse* is due out this summer — and the current hardware requirements are pretty light, too: a 486/33Mhz, Win 3.1, and 8MB of RAM, making it part of the trickle of titles coming out for gamers still using aging hardware.



Lighthouse from Sierra offers puzzles and strange characters in an alien dimension.

METALWERKS

Sanctuary Woods is readying a new title that looks very

Continued on page 56

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Product Information Number 111

Continued from page 55

interesting. ***METALWERKS*** puts you in a grim near-future world where your task is to go out and steal the parts you need to build battle-robots. The game's construction phase will use real design principles, as you add lasers, blowtorches, and drills to arm your robot, then use remote control to send it into battle against the security robots of the city's evil overlords. With support for modem and network play, ***METALWERKS*** will add a fresh, intriguing dimension to multi-player gaming; you'll have to win half the battle before it starts, in the design phase. The game will use fully-rotational 3D sprites and polygons, and an industrial-music soundtrack will accompany the game, so it should look great and sound great, too.

NHL Powerplay '96 features real NHL players and logos.

NHL Powerplay '96

Although Electronic Arts' *NHL 96* is the current king of the PC hockey arena, a new title from Virgin Interactive Entertainment is getting ready to challenge it. Offering a full selection of plays and strategies — including running traps, dumps, and chases — *NHL Powerplay '96* will also feature stats, rinkside announcers, multi-player modes, and all of the 1996 players with updated stats.

PCG

The Internet Revolution

Will it change PC games?

The first-ever Internet Game Developer's Conference took place in February in San Jose, California, the heart of the Silicon Valley. Bringing together investors and developers interested in Internet gaming, it was hosted by Mpath, one of several Internet game networks.

There were a number of speakers, including Douglas Adams, of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* fame; Jeff Braun, the CEO of Maxis, publisher of *SimCity* and its siblings; and Danielle Berry, a developer of early multi-player games such as *M.U.L.E.* and *Modem Wars*. Game developers in attendance included LucasArts, Interplay, Papyrus, Virgin, Looking Glass, Accolade, and Activision.

Some interesting issues were brought up, much of great interest to gamers: Everyone was excited about the idea of commercial-quality games being played over the Internet, a market Mpath believes could be valued at $500 million by the end of the decade. There was also a consensus that 28.8K modems would be the standard for the next couple of years, since modem technology may have finally topped off.

It was clear that most game companies are very excited about the Internet, both as a new gaming platform and a new way of retailing game software.

"Every game we're shipping will have an Internet online component," Jeff Braun, Chairman and CEO of Maxis, told *PC Gamer*. "I think eventually it might translate to where online is the main game."

Microsoft explained they had formed a new product unit focused on Internet gaming. They are also working to integrate the Internet fully into Windows 95, to the point where you can keep Internet sites as folders on your desktop. They're also shifting the Microsoft Network away from being a dial-up proprietary online service, like AOL, into being a "super-site" on the World Wide Web.

Danielle Berry said it was time for computer games to get back to being social interactions. She believes that although early Internet games will be Doom-like "playgrounds with toy guns," eventually the social aspect will win out, and more games will resemble the 'net's MUDs (multi-user dungeons).

Brian Moriarty, one of the founders of Mpath, gave perhaps the most unusual presentation. Closing the doors and turning off the lights, he focused "the point" — a green argon laser beam — high up onto the wall. Then, with a microphone and some underlying music, he gave an impassioned, quixotic speech on his vision of what the Web is and what it could be, drawing upon everything from evolution and cyberpunk fiction to interconnectedness and spirituality to convey his point — that there is nothing that can't be done with the Web.

Zoop Hits the Web

Viacom game demo plays over Internet

By making use of cutting-edge technology, Viacom New Media has become the first publisher to demo a commercial game over the World Wide Web. When you visit their web site, you can now play a demo of *Zoop* while online, without having to download the file, unzip it, install it — or do any of the otherwise necessary steps for sampling a game demo.

Of course, *Zoop*, as a fast-moving, Tetris-style arcade puzzler, is well-suited for playing over the World Wide Web, since it's not too complicated and the animations are limited — reducing bandwidth and speeding loading of the application.

To put *Zoop* on the Web, Viacom used Java, the new cross-platform, object-oriented language developed by Sun Microsystems. *Zoop* is a perfect "applet" to demonstrate what Java can do — it downloads itself onto a host computer, lets you play, and then disappears once it's done. And, of course, if you want a permanent copy of *Zoop*, a traditional demo is available directly from the Viacom web site as well.

Will wonders never cease? You can play Viacom New Media's *Zoop* on the World Wide Web.

Of course, this is new and buggy stuff, and the gameplay of the web version is certainly slower and jerkier than a normal session of *Zoop*, but it's remarkably playable. To try it out, you'll need either the Windows 95 or Solaris operating system, and a Java-enhanced Netscape browser (Netscape Navigator version 2.0b3 or higher) to use. A Pentium-baesd system is recommended, although we were able to play it on a 486/50 with 8 megabytes of RAM.

To play *Zoop* on the Web, tune your browser to *http://www.viacomnewmedia.com*, and check it out for yourself.

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Product Information Number 127

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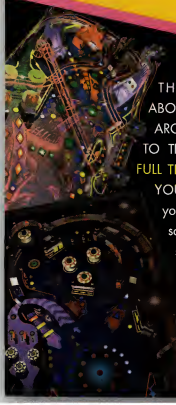

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Ogg the Empire!

Book takes the mystery out of Internet gaming

People have been playing multi-player games on the Internet for years, but most PC owners have never heard of them. A new book by Rawn Shah and Jim Romine, titled simply *Playing Wargames on the Internet*, tackles that problem — it's a strategy guide to two of the bigger internet games, *netrek* and *Empire*.

Empire is a monster of a wargame, allowing from two to 100 players to compete for global domination through resource management and military strategy. While its ASCII "graphics" are hideously ugly by anyone's standards, the intricate rules and human opponents make this one of the most challenging computer wargames available. Best of all, you can play for free anytime, over the Internet, either in "Blitz" scenarios with turns every ten minutes, or in more extended campaigns.

There are more than 150 different military units in *Empire* — far more than in most PC wargames — ranging from zeppelins and cavalry to intercontinental ballistic missiles, but concentrating on late 20th-century conventional forces.

This new book on some older games will teach you the fine art of war. Internet-style.

The book does a good job of presenting this colossal struggle in about 175 pages, giving a first-turn walkthrough, a complete index of commands, and useful, if grim, tips: "If you accidentally starve some civilians, you may be better off shooting those that survived starvation, since they will be upset."

Unfortunately, although *Empire* has DOS clients, the author focuses on the game's UNIX commands — which makes it less useful for the general public.

The second half of the book focuses on *netrek*, a space combat game based loosely on the Star Trek universe. Sixteen players split into two teams and fight it out, using their keyboards and mice to control ships in real-time, 2D graphics.

You play *netrek* by getting a Windows or UNIX client program and then connecting to a *netrek* server. The book explains the various key commands; the game's background, tactics, variants, and ship specs — and important slang like "Ogging":

"Ogging, to fly up to an enemy, cloaked at a high speed, uncloak, and then let loose with a burst of torpedoes."

Focusing on just the two games makes this a valuable resource for gamers, since the book is able to go in much greater detail than if it were a general survey of all net games, and if you've ever wanted good, solid advice on these games, this is the place. But there is very little in the way of explaining *how* to use your internet account to play these games, and if stuff like telnet, UNIX, and ftp disturb you, this book isn't for you.

Playing Wargames on the Internet, (Wiley; $19.95) is available now. For more information, call (212) 850-6336, or visit their website at *http://www.wiley.com/compbooks/*.

PCs Invade Console Turf

Major online network turns to PCs

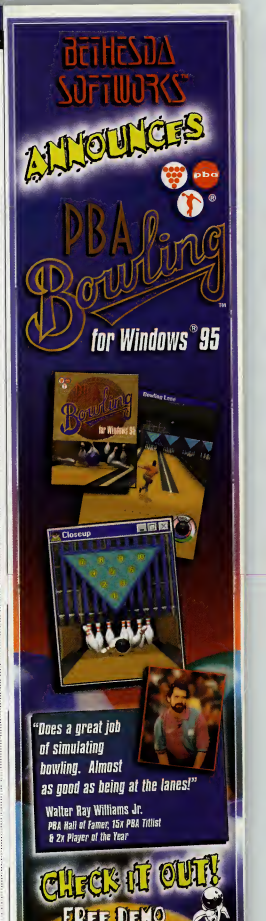
XBAND, a longtime provider of online gaming for console owners, has recently begun gearing up to provide service to PC gamers. The expanded service will feature such popular titles as *HardBall 5*, *Super Street Fighter II*, and *Locus* for the PC. These titles will come bundled with the XBAND software, and will sport "Play it on XBAND" stickers on their packaging.

Some of the features of the network include E-mail, score tracking, online newspapers and simplified matching-up of opponents; by using the XBAND ranking system, players can quickly identify the skill levels of their

Bob and Sluggo get ready to challenge each other on the *Doom II* battlefield. No, we don't know who they are, either.

rivals and get connected and gaming in minutes. The best players will enjoy high rankings, breaking into the Top 10 and the Hall of Fame. To get connected, you'll need Windows 95 and at least a 9600 baud modem.

The XBAND platform began in 1994, starting with the Sega Genesis and, later, the Super Nintendo. In order to offer E-mail and screen names for console users, a virtual keyboard was designed, wherein you moved a cursor over a keyboard on a screen, selecting letters. Although this technology won't be necessary for PC gamers, it will allow users of all platforms to send notes and challenges to each other. For more information, call Catapult Entertainment, Inc., at (408) 366-1735.



Product Information Number 97

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Tilt that Keyboard!

ThrustMaster creates pinball controller

Easily attaching to the side of your keyboard, these new pinball flippers from ThrustMaster bring arcade action to your desktop.

There's been an unbelievable flood of pinball games for the PC over the last six months or so, titles like *Pinball Illusions, Psycho Pinball, Extreme Pinball, 3D Ultra Pinball, Hyper 3-D Pinball,* and *Pinball World,* to name more than a few. These titles have brought all the bright lights and bells of old-time arcades right onto your PC, but there's always been something missing — those shift keys on your keyboard just don't have the *feel* of a true pinball machine.

ThrustMaster saw this ailment and has come up with a cure: the Wizzard Pinball Controller, a pair of flippers that attach to the sides of your keyboard and plug into the back of any standard dual-port game card. The Wizzard has two-stage flipper buttons that allow you to have independent control of both the upper and lower flippers. But best of all, the controller's "table-nudge sensors" allow you to lean on the table just like the real thing — but be careful, bump it too hard, and you'll tilt the table.

The ThrustMaster Wizzard Pinball Controller ships with one complete pinball title, *Royal Flush.* It's available now, with a suggested retail price of $39.95.

Local Hero

PCG writer gets major attention

We've always known we were a hip and talented bunch, but sometimes we even surprise ourselves. Our very own William R. Trotter, *PC Gamer* senior writer and the author of our wargaming column, *The Desktop General,* has been published a third time — to some terrific notices.

Not only is he an expert in military history, Trotter is equally well-versed in the history of music. Now that he's gone and published *Priest of Music: The Life of Dimitri Mitropoulos,* a definitive biography of this Greek-American conductor, Trotter continues to add to his reputation as a true renaissance man.

The book covers the life of Mitropoulos, who was Leonard Bernstein's predecessor at the New York Philharmonic and a figure who remains somewhat under Bernstein's shadow. Trotter and other recent scholars have attempted to right this error, returning an unappreciated master to his own — and Trotter's efforts have received positive reviews in both the *New York Times,* the *Chicago Tribune,* and Britain's *Independent.*

Of course, this isn't the first of the Desktop General's well-received books. His other credits include the novel *Winter Fire* (E.P. Dutton, 1993) and the military history *A Frozen Hell: The Story of the Russo-Finnish War of 1939-40* (Algonquin Books, 1991), which recently led to his speaking to an assembly of U.S. Marine officers at North Carolina's Camp Lejeune.

Poke a Stick in the Hornet's Nest

Suncom's newest high-end joystick fills the F-18 niche

These days, air combat enthusiasts demand total realism in their games; they assume their games will duplicate real aerodynamics, and expect the cockpit on the screen to mirror its real-world counterpart. Every game detail should recreate the air combat experience in its entirety.

But this depth of sophistication is worthless if played with a worn-out, two-button joystick. True desk pilots expect and demand joysticks based on real airplane controls.

That's the theory behind Suncom's latest controller, anyway. The company's newest entry into the high-end joystick market is the F/A-18 Hornet Tactical Control Stick. Modelled directly from the actual aircraft's hand grip, it was designed specifically for the air combat perfectionist, replicating the look and feel of the actual pilot's controls.

Fully programmable, it features a two-stage trigger, Weapon Release and Nose Gear Steering buttons, and five-position Castle, Trim, and Auto-Acquisition switches. Programmable options include long key strings, meaning you can assign complex keyboard commands (such as Alt+Shift+F10) to a single button or switch position.

So how realistic is it? "Suncom is currently providing the McDonnell Douglas Flight Simulation Group with a version of this same stick," says Dan Zemaitis, Suncom's marketing manager, "for use in their pilot training and simulation development."

In addition, there are two upcoming F-18 throttles that will work in tandem with the Hornet joystick.

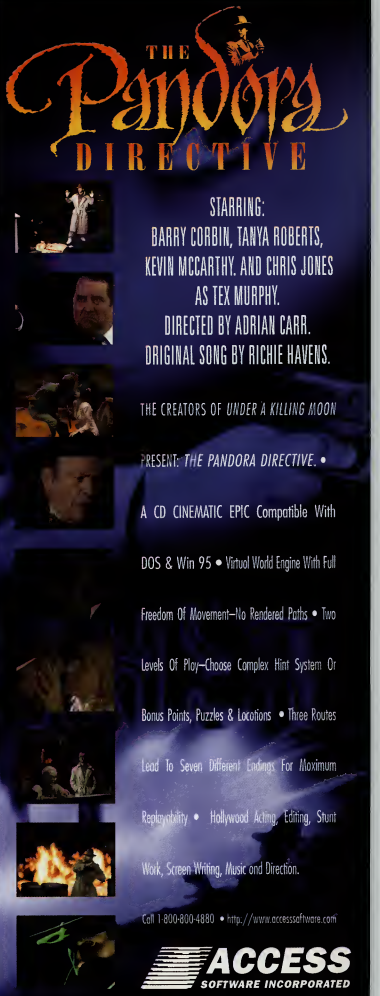
Suncom's suggested retail price for the Hornet control stick is $149.99, although we can expect street prices nearer to $100. For the throttle, street prices will likely range between $90 and $150. Both the stick and the throttle should be available in the second quarter of 1996. For more details, contact Suncom at (800) 228-7449.

The PC Gamer Playlist

Our addiction to gaming is sad, but how can we stop when the Gaming Goodness(TM) just keeps on going? Dan now proudly sports a "Born to Game" tattoo, embarrassing us at important social functions, while Mike has become a burned-out husk of a man, reduced to begging for hints and cheat codes. But there has been no sadder sight than seeing the once-proud Joe Novicki reduced to babbling, sitting in a corner and babbling the orc voices from *Warcraft II*.

1. *Duke Nukem 3D*/3D Realms — Everybody
2. *Warcraft II*/Blizzard Entertainment— Everybody
3. *Zone Raiders*/Virgin Interactive Entertainment — Mike, Dan
4. *Terminator: Future Shock*/Bethesda — Todd, Joe
5. *Screamer*/Virgin Interactive Entertainment — Mike, Jason
6. *CyberMage*/Origin — Dan, Todd, Mike
7. *The Beast Within*/Sierra — Dean, Lisa
8. *Descent 2*/Interplay — Todd, Dan, Robin
9. *Battleground: Gettysburg*/TalonSoft — Joe, Jason
10. *Destruction Derby*/Sony Interactive — Dan, Lisa

Terminator: Future Shock reduced Mike to a babbling game-freak.



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Can MicroProse RECAPTURE the MAGIC?

What's in the cards for Maryland's PC gaming legend? Can the former giant rebuild its reputation as one of the coolest software houses in the business?

by T. Liam McDonald

Looking back over the past ten-plus years of computer gaming, it's hard to find a company that has a greater preponderance of classic titles than MicroProse. *Pirates, Civilization, Railroad Tycoon, Gunship, F-19, F-15 Strike Eagle, M-1 Tank Platoon*: the list is extensive. A few years ago they were at their strongest, growing fast, and set to be one of the major game publishing labels. They expanded their line aggressively, and began tackling new areas like adventures and roleplaying games.

But everything didn't quite work out. They grew too far too fast. Their expensive and hotly anticipated roleplaying game, *Darklands*, was plagued by

problems. Their adventure games fizzled. Their stock value took a hit. There were layoffs. Even in the midst of one of their most successful periods ever, with such terrific titles as *X-COM, Master of Orion, Fleet Defender, 1942: Pacific Air War*, and *Transport Tycoon*, there were disappointments like *Across the Rhine* and outright stinkers like *Zeppelin*, and *Pizza Tycoon*. In the middle of all this, in what could be seen as a either as a saving stroke or the final ignominy, they were acquired by a longtime flight-sim rival, Spectrum HoloByte, and made an affiliate studio.

Studio Head Tony Parks is candid about the last few years: "We did a lot of things wrong. We went after some bad titles to fill holes. We had an unfocused strategy. We had some good titles, but then we had some poor ones in the middle. We're not going to do that anymore, and we've canceled a lot of outside projects. Primarily, we are good at doing strategy games and simulation games. But for a while there, we tried just about every genre. And, for the same reason anybody can't just come in this business and do something new, we also didn't do some of those things very well."

Parks, a five-year veteran of MicroProse's ups and downs, took over last August as part of the restructuring under Spectrum. After the transitional team left, Parks met with his developers and affiliated studios (SimTex and MicroProse UK) and "did a lot of soul-searching. We sat down in small groups and talked about what we wanted to do. For the first time, we got [MicroProse co-founder] Sid Meier to come back into the fold and participate. Sid is the kind of guy that wants to be left alone to do his own thing, and he was bothered by a lot of the stuff we had been doing. So we looked at projects that were in development or under consideration, and carefully examined them to make sure we were happy doing them. A lot of titles were canceled, and now we're doing only products that we think fit our strategy. The products we have on this list are really good; we feel good about them."

Parks has a reason to feel proud: their 1996 line is a strong one, with six major titles. *Civilization II* and *Master of Orion II: Battle at Antares* will be available shortly after you read this; *European Air War* (the follow-up to *1942: Pacific Air War*), *Superheroes*, and *Magic: The Gathering* are set for summer, and *X-COM: Apocalypse* for fall. Also planned, but not in progress, is *MechWarrior 3*, which MicroProse just acquired.

All in all, in looks to be a very good year.

There's no doubt that *Civilization* is one of the best PC titles ever. We rated it 97 in our list of the best games of all time and some of our readers *still* say we cheated it. Would you believe the sequel sounds even better?

Civilization II

When we were doing the "Forty Best Games of All Time" back in 1994, there was some disagreement. *Doom* was listed as #1, and although I was among the contributors who tried to convince the *PCG* editors of their error, explaining that *Civilization* was clearly #1, it was for naught: it took the #2 spot.

No matter. *We* still know the truth. Anyone who's stayed up all night just to play a *little bit longer* and get those nukes *known*. You know, and you've walked for the long-talked-about *Civilization 2000*. Rumors of great new units, *Civ* in space, and other cool stuff abounded. Some four years passed, things changed a bit, and *Civilization 2000* became *Civilization II*.

The graphics in *Civ II* will be greatly improved — but that's just the start.

The buzz at MicroProse says combat in *Civilization II* will be much more complex than in the original.

Civ II is just about ready: when I visited MicroProse's Hunt Valley, Maryland offices, the AI was going through the test-wringer, and some multimedia chrome was being added. The work of Sid Meier and his *Colonization* co-designer, Brian Reynolds, *Civ II* refines and builds upon the original, expanding many of the core ideas of this classic game. In the process, the notion of taking *Civ* into space for this version was scrapped, though it may yet happen.

As Reynolds points out, "We made a very conscious decision when we did this design not to extend the timeline into the future. We decided we might want to a do a whole game like that, so it ends where it did originally. We found that once people learned how to play the original *Civ*, there weren't many games that got into the modern era. But when we rebalanced the game, a lot of people are get into the modern era. We wanted to find all the things that were strong about *Civilization*, keep those, then give some people more of what was good and give more detail to areas that were sketched in very broad strokes."

The refinements Reynolds is talking about come in two major forms: improvements based on the capabilities of new technology, and improvements based on player feedback. First, the new look: the terrain is now seen from a skewed, rather than a direct, top-down view, with the

"GAME OF THE YEAR."

SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER

★★★★

"THE DIG...SHOWS THE DIRECTION THAT ADVENTURE GAMES NEED TO GO."

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

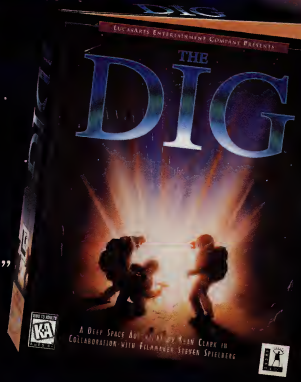
"AN ENTHRALLING STORY LINE, AND EXCELLENT SOUND EFFECTS AND MUSIC CREATE A COMPLETE GAME EXPERIENCE."

PC ENTERTAINMENT

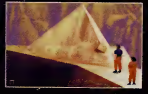
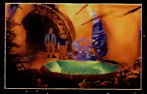
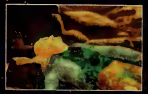
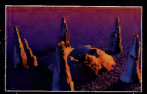
EDITORS' CHOICE

"THE DIG IS YET ANOTHER FUN AND REWARDING ADVENTURE GAME FROM THE MASTERS OF THE GENRE."

PC GAMER



THE GREATEST MYSTERY OF ALL AWAITS.

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Product Information Number 180

expected improvements in graphics quality. Cities now grow dynamically through the ages, changing from little huts to full metropolises, and the city screen shows your buildings in 3D. A smattering of video has been added unobtrusively in two ways: short "Wonders of the World" videos when a new wonder is built, and video advisers for trade, military, science, and diplomacy.

Beneath the surface, however, much more has changed. There are more Wonders of the World, such as Sun Tzu's War Academy and Leonardo's Workshop, and many of the other wonders have been balanced so they don't give an unfair edge to any player. What most people will be talking about, however, are the twenty-plus new units, including Alpine (treats all terrain as road), Partisans ("guerillas," created whenever you conquer a city), Marines (attack right off the ship), Paratroopers, Cruise missiles, AEGIS cruisers, Helicopters, SAM sites, Spies, Engineers, and numerous other cool things. A lot of units were added or modified to smooth out the large gaps left when new technology became available, such as the jump from Catapults to Tanks. Now, for example, mobile units also include Elephants, Crusaders, Dragoons, Cavalry, and Napoleonic units. It's all tied to a more sophisticated technology track with no more dead ends and more technologies, such as Amphibious Warfare, Economics, Espionage, Laser, Leadership, and many others.

But the two major changes are to combat and diplomacy. The original *Civilization* had a simplified combat system in which, for instance, a Phalanx had a five-to-one chance of beating a Tank (and sometimes did). So, in addition to attack, defense, and movement values for each unit, two new values — hit points and firepower — have been added. Firepower rates how much damage you do each round, and hit points track the damage done. Combat is still instant, and one unit always dies, but now there are multiple "rounds" in quick succession until one dies. This means some victorious units can emerge seriously damaged from combat, shown with a little "health bar."

There is also a more complex diplomatic model. You can forge intricate alliances that allow your units to ignore ally zones of control and even move through and be repaired in their cities. These alliances can't be broken on a whim: you give notice you're leaving the alliance and then all units in your former allies' territory are removed to the nearest city. Plus, a war can end not only with peace, but with a ceasefire that separates you and the enemy. The result of all this is a far more complex state of relationships between opponents, made all the more important by your "personal reputation," which affects all your dealings with other races. This reputation falls as you break an agreement, with diplomatic penalty taken each time.

This is a new, much better *Civ*, with changes incorporated from years of play and player feedback. When considering what to include, Reynolds says, "we rejected things that would take the game off down a tangent. People had suggested a tactical combat system, for example, and we had that in the original design document: you zoom in and fight things out with little units. We felt that tended to distract from what went on in the strategic map. So we went with the new combat system to help play up the strengths in the original game."

As for why the original *Civilization* is still played four years later, when the average game's shelf-life is about six months, Reynolds points out that "the game doesn't depend on the technology. That's why even the original had such a long life span. The things that were cool when it came out weren't the great new multimedia technology or the huge art budget. The magic is in the design and the strategy itself. The machines are faster now, so we can do more AI that does more analysis. There are ways the technology helps us, so we can continue to improve things as we go along. But so much of what we do doesn't depend on technology."

In the new *Civilization*, cities will gradually evolve from wooden huts to full-blown metropolises.

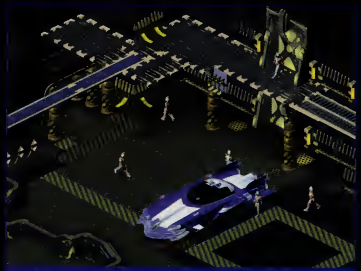
***X-COM: Apocalypse* will be a much bigger game than its popular predecessor, but it will take place in a smaller world — a huge city known as Megalopolis.**

X-COM: Apocalypse

1994's *X-COM* was a monster hit, and deservedly so. Its combination of strategy and tactics gave it depth and replayability, while its squad-level combat engine gave it the feel of an action game. With one hit under their belt, Producer Stuart Whyte says, "we wanted to get another *X-COM* game out as quickly as possible, and we wanted to use the same engine again. We really like that original engine. So that's where *Terror From the Deep* came from. But with *X-COM: Apocalypse*, we wanted to move on and do something really new and special. So this is a complete rewrite, but still has all the features that made the other game cool."

X-COM: Apocalypse begins in

The designers of *X-COM: Apocalypse* say we can expect lots of new gadgets and 16 new alien types.



X-COM: Apocalypse will keep the exciting tactical combat that made the original a hit — but the graphics will get an amazing overhaul.

Air-to-air combat has been expanded for the new *X-COM*, with gorgeous battles in the skies over Megalopolis.

2084. Earth civilization has been crippled by overpopulation and pollution, and people have moved into self-contained "Utopian" cities such as Megalopolis. Soon, society begins to unravel, and — of course — aliens are at the root of the problem. They are traveling through an interdimensional gateway located somewhere in Megalopolis, slowly infiltrating society by taking over the minds of important figures in politics, law enforcement, and business. Only the soldiers of X-COM stand in the way.

Apocalypse is a very different game from its predecessors in some ways. The expected step forward to more detailed, hi-res graphics is the first thing you'll notice. Gone is the global "geoscape" view, since the entire game takes place in the vast Megalopolis. City-level combat is more sophisticated, and the simple ship-to-ship combat from the original has been made more detailed. Now, X-COM ships chase aliens ships around a crowded cityscape, snapping off shots as they zoom between buildings. There's also an new element of danger: miss a shot, and you could take out a skyscraper. If that skyscraper belongs to a company that builds an essential weapon system, you can forget getting that system any time soon.

The tactical system has been upgraded to hi-res graphics, but remains similar to the original — with one important exception: the developers hope to have real-time as well as turn-based combat. The battles take place largely inside the buildings, and with lots of civilians in the way. You also may not always be fighting aliens: if they manage to convert the Megalopolis police force, the most powerful organization in the game, you can count on police-versus-X-COM encounters.

Missions come in many varieties: Sometimes you have to just nail aliens, other times you have to use spies to keep a careful watch on suspected collaborators. Combat itself has gotten bigger, with as many as forty soldiers in a combat sequence at once. These can be controlled as squads of five and given specific tasks for each mission. All the weaponry has changed, and a few new skills have been added. You can also count on sixteen all-new alien types.

Gameplay unfolds in three distinct phases: You begin by investigating strange incidents, such as CEOs who appear to have been taken over by aliens. These lead to full-scale enemy intrusions, with large alien ships coming through the dimension gates and air-to-air combat in the skies over the city. Finally, if you do all the right research, you travel back through the gate to take on the aliens on their home planet. This alien world is done from the same perspective as the cityscape, but with wildly different scenery and a much larger playing area.

If you thought, as we did, that *Terror From the Deep* was less of a step forward than it should have been, rest assured: *Apocalypse* looks hot.

European Air War

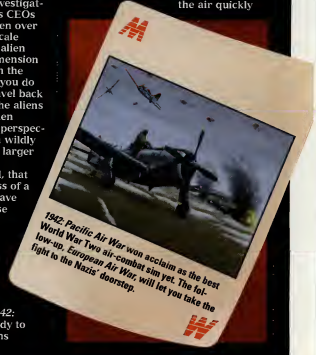
MicroProse's flight sim team, responsible for the superb *1942: Pacific Air War*, is getting ready to take on the Nazis. With lessons

European Air War will take the beautiful visuals and great gameplay of *1942: Pacific Air War* to the European Theater.

learned from *PAW* and a technological move forward, Producer Ed Fletcher, Designer Mike Rea, Lead Programmer Mike Springer, Lead Artist Errol Roberts, and the rest of the team are recreating the European Theater of World War Two for *European Air War*.

EAW covers two primary areas of history. The largest chunk is the air-war over Europe from April 1943 to April 1945, as the RAF and U.S. Army Air Force take on Hitler's Luftwaffe. One full career option will be offered, and you'll be able to fly for any nation that participated in this period, while another "mini-career" path pits the Brits and the Germans against each other in the Battle of Britain, 1940.

Rea, who did mountains of research, wanted the main campaign to embrace the entire stint of the 8th Air Force in Europe — hence the time period. Many of the elements that made *PAW* so good have been carried forward, such as single missions to get you into the air quickly



1942: Pacific Air War won acclaim as the best World War Two air-combat sim yet. The follow-up, *European Air War*, will let you take the fight to the Nazis' doorstep.

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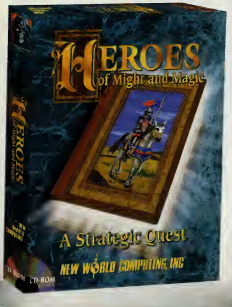

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In *European Air War*, you'll be able to fly an entire career as a German, British, or American pilot.

had with the game.

Twenty planes are being modeled in the new game, seventeen of them being usable models, such as the Germans' Me-109s, Me-110s, Fw-190s, and Me-262A1; the Brits' Hurricane Mk1, various Spitfires, Typhoon, and Tempest V; and the Americans' P-47s, P-51s, and P-38s. In addition, unusable models of the B-17, B-25, B-26, Ju-87, Ju88a, He-111, Me-41 Mosquito, and V-1 will be included for escort missions and as opponents. Rea did not only tons of research to get these planes' flight models down, but also to create the ground database by researching 8th AF bombing objectives throughout the war. A massive stretch of Europe is modeled, from central England all the way to Western Germany. As Springer points out, the "sheer number of objects is amazing. There are over 200 airbases, 300 cities, 4000 ground objects, and the campaign tracks all that. This means that when you bomb a factory in one mission and fly over it in the next, it will remain destroyed."

In addition to sweet SVGA graphics, *EAW* will have higher resolutions at the bottom end, too.

The engine is also enhanced, with revamped static views to eliminate the "blind spot" problems of *PAW*. Though building on the core *PAW* engine, they've upgraded in some important areas: the 16-bit code is now 32-bit, and the base resolution is now 320x240 rather than 320x200, with a slick, high-res 640x480 option. There is also talk of it will ship with a network version for up to eight pilots, with live flyers plugged into missions on each side, and possibly a straight, head-to-head dogfight mode.

As for the realism-versus-playability issues that plague any sim, Fletcher is working hard to strike a balance.

"The people who are most vocal are hard-core users," he observes. "At the same time, I just got a call from a user who said 'Don't pay attention to those hard-core nutcases; they're not your big market. It's us normal guys who are your big market.' That's why we have so many detail levels.

"The main thing that we're trying to achieve from this is to provide a world for you. Mike has really been working hard on creating western Europe in 1943, with all the proper strategic targets. If you can go out there and, mission after mission, take out of these targets, the commander will say 'You've successfully hurt the aircraft industry, now we're going after bridges.' We want a little better feeling of continuity. We want you to feel what it was like to be in a real world."

on sweep, strike, search-and-destroy, interception, and escort missions. But this time, the campaign mode is more complex.

You can start careers as a Warrant Officer, flying formation in a wing, and work your way up. As wing leader, you give orders to your wing in battle, while a squadron leader controls more than one wing, and a group commander controls assignments for all three squadrons. Fletcher hopes to pull off a more complex level of control and pilot skill, as pilots become better through experience, much like *Gunship 2000*. This means you'll want to protect that rookie who you nurtured into a skilled pilot, and you'll feel a real loss when he goes down in flames.

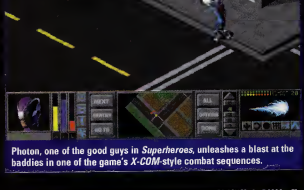
To make this all work better, the team wants to improve wingman support and make pilots more aware of each other in the sky. Communication with fellow pilots and control over attacks will be more effective, and the relationship between pilot and wingman, who were historically inseparable, will be handled more realistically. The "you against the world" model (a common sim problem) of *PAW* was a common complaint, and MicroProse hopes more dynamic and complex virtual pilots will make this less of an issue. This, along with better flight transiting features, will eliminate the few minor problems some players

Ever wonder why there aren't any great superhero games for the PC? MPS hopes to change that with their upcoming *Superheroes*.

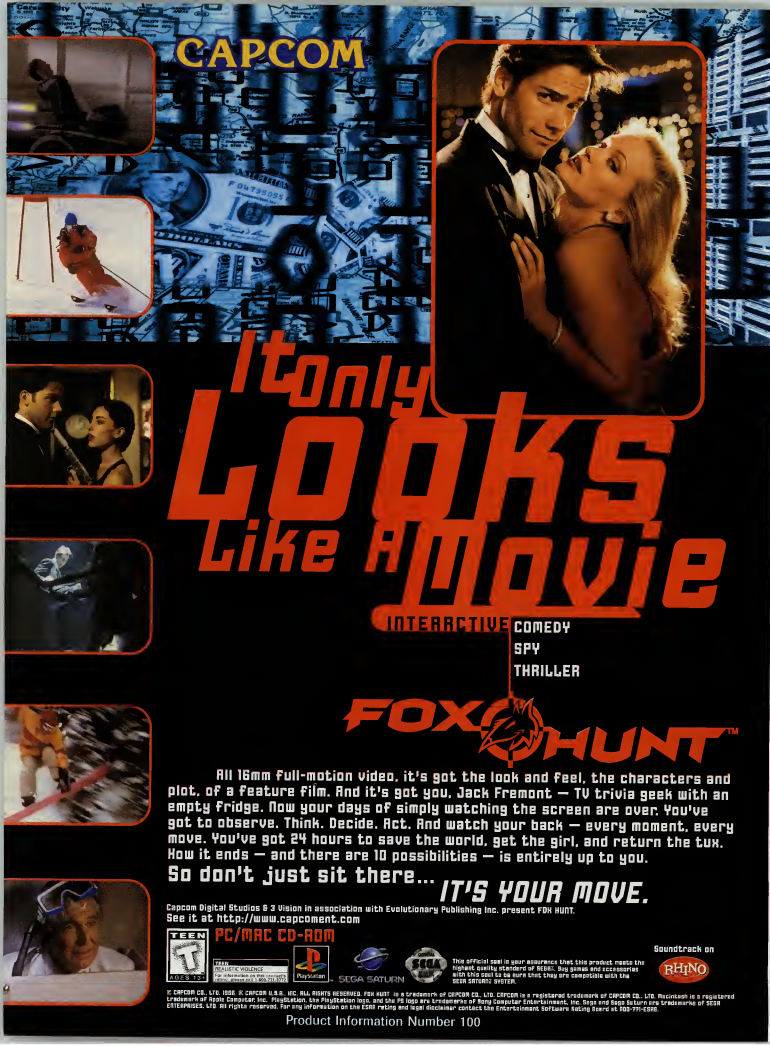
Superheroes

Think of SimTex's *Superheroes* as "*X-COM* with superheroes," and you have some idea of what SimTex has in store. The idea is simple: It's a short time in the future, and superheroes are commonplace. At the beginning of the game, you start your own superhero league, recruiting or creating superheroes to battle the three super-villain leagues. Missions and superheroes can be generated randomly, giving a high replayability as you tackle the bad guys with different heroes who have different powers.

You start off with fifteen ready-made superheroes to chose from, such as Nightshade, Hunter, Photon, and others. Each has his or her own



Photon, one of the good guys in *Superheroes*, unleashes a blast at the baddies in one of the game's *X-COM*-style combat sequences.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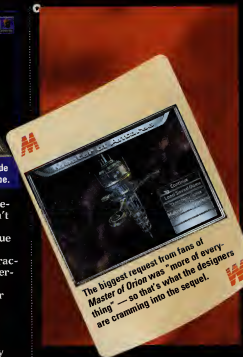
Your team of hand-picked and custom-made heroes will face missions all over the globe.

powers, such as the ability to shape-shift or fire mind blasts. If you don't like any of these heroes, you can make your own by creating a unique set of character properties.

Each hero has eight base characteristics, such as intelligence, dexterity, strength, and so on. They also have skills, ranging from computer technology, to martial arts, occult studies, high finance, and beyond. There are fifty superpowers altogether to choose from, including physical blast, mental blast, energy blast, direct missile attacks, telekinesis, and so on, as well as over thirty "modifier" ratings, such as armor strength, automatic weapons, and other values.

Similar in design to the paper-game, *Champions*, (which itself has become a computer vaporware legend), *Superheroes* is equal parts *Syndicate* and *X-COM*. It's divided into two main sections: a global view and an angled 3D tactical combat view. When you create your league, you get a superhero base, with training, computer, deployment, and medical facilities, which can all be expanded. In the global view, you get missions much as in the original *X-COM*, then send your superheroes into battle. These missions are randomly generated, with an overall strategy behind them as you work to destroy the three super-villain leagues and the leaders. A wide variety of landscapes ensures a high degree of mission diversity and replayability, with battles across a mix of city views, enemy headquarters, forests, frozen tundras, and other locations.

Any kind of mission the designers can think of will be included: free-for-all fights, crime-stopping, superhero deathtraps, government subversion, recovery of an imprisoned hero, and more. Plus, each time you play, the members of the super-villain league will have different skills and properties, adding even more to the replay factor. With *Superheroes* set to ship with multi-player support, as well as its wide array of heroes and missions, this looks like it could be a summertime hit. No one has managed to effectively pull off a superhero game yet, but if anyone can do it, it's the folks at SimTex.



The biggest request from fans of *Master of Orion* was "more of everything" — so that's what the designers are cramming into the sequel.

Master of Orion II

While *Superheroes* shows a new direction for SimTex, with *Master of Orion II: Battle at Antares*, they return to the game that put them on the map. *MOO* was, in essence, *Civilization* in space: you start with a single planet and colony, then develop resources, design and build ships, research new technology, create trade, and expand your empire to surrounding planets. Each of its ten different races had different strengths and weakness that helped shape the way the game was played.

MOO II, formerly titled *Master of Antares*, builds on suggestions made by its dedicated players, while it incorporates the lessons SimTex leaned in *Master of Magic*. The most requested feature, according to designer Ken Burd, was "more of everything. More stars, more planets, more ship types." SimTex is doing that, plus some.

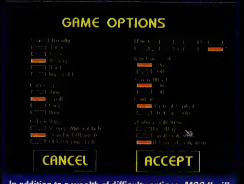
For starters, there's a simplified interface and a new tech screen with a better, more organized technology tree. A summary each turn describing what planets are doing helps manage your empire. Two new races, the Darlocks and the Tralarians, have also been added.

But, as Burd says, "The main differences are in two areas. Colony development is a lot more detailed. The colony production will be very similar to *Master of Magic*, in that you build buildings that will give you more production values, research or whatever. The other main change is in the tactical combat sequence."

As Burd describes it, the ship-to-ship combat will now be more detailed, with a bigger area to fight in. There is also some talk about ground combat units, but that wasn't in place yet in the version we looked at.

Possibly the best feature for *MOO II* will be the custom race options. You now have the ability to set your own racial bonuses, essen-

Colony development in *Master of Orion II: Battle at Antares* will be a lot more complex than in the original; as in *Master of Magic*, you'll construct buildings that will help make you a more formidable foe.



In addition to a wealth of difficulty options, *MOO II* will feature options that let you create your own alien races.

tially creating your own races. You can choose from values such as starting technology, population growth, special talents, farming, industry, and other properties, to make a wholly unique race. *MOO II* expands upon all the major concepts of the original, while eliminating some of the weaknesses. The result will be one of the most complex and detailed space strategy games yet.

PC gamers will discover the phenomenal appeal of *Magic: The Gathering* when the computer version of the card game is released.

Magic: The Gathering

If you've been living under a rock for the past year, you might have missed something called *Magic: The Gathering*. A collectible fantasy roleplaying card game created by Wizards of the Coast, *Magic* is an obsession for thousands, who can easily spend $1,000 to $3,000 to get a good collection of cards. You begin with a starter deck of cards; each card features a piece of fantasy art and unique properties. Small "booster packs" can also be bought, so collectors can add better and more powerful cards to their deck. Using different kinds of "manna" to fuel attacks, you and an opponent "duel" with cards that represent creatures, spells, and other modifiers and forms of attack.

When David Etheridge of MicroProse first saw the game, he knew there was something here: "We had four people playing, and we were getting violent with each other. It was really obvious that it was a extraordinarily well-devised game. Every time you saw a new card, the wheels started turning about how you were going to use it." He brought the project to MicroProse, who quickly snapped up the computer rights before anyone else could.

Of course, bringing a card game to computer has its own problems, which initially frustrated MicroProse. Early work on the game, reported in other publications, has been almost completely discarded. In the end, they solved the problem with an inspired move: they brought Sid Meier onto the design team to create an entirely new approach. The result will be a game that is essentially three games in one: a straight, computer version of *Magic: The Gathering*; a restricted, "tournament" mode that uses sealed decks; and a strategic-fantasy game devised by Meier.

For the basic *Magic* game, there will be about four or five hundred cards which you'll have access to at all times. Using a Windows-based interface with different "filters," you easily create custom decks to allow you to battle over sixty artificial opponents or live players via modem. (These customizable filters allow you to see all your blue cards at once, for example, or just all your "goblin" cards at once. In this way, you create a "character" for yourself, based on the best deck you can put together.) Though still under construction, the interface looks very customizable, and even includes instant hypertext help for rules clarification.

Still, having all your cards at once eliminates the "trading" and discovery of new cards, a big part of the original game's appeal. Another method of getting cards will be online tournaments. MicroProse has ambitious — but as-yet-unconfirmed — plans to bring *Magic* online with a full tournament area. They hope, for example, to be able to announce regular sealed-deck duels in which up to five hundred people compete for rare cards.

But they still needed a way to add some new twist to this game. That's where Sid Meier comes in. He has created an exploration game in which you start with a deck from a random selection of cards, then set out across a fantasy landscape. The goal is to destroy five castles, and along the way you battle creatures, talk to people, perform quests, and even explore dungeons. When you need to battle, you do it with cards, and if you win, you get a selection of high-value cards to expand your deck. Ultimately, you'll have to duel the traditional big, nasty wizard to win, but each game is randomized, meaning how you get there will be different each time.

"In *Magic*," says Meier, "certain cards are rare, so there's a whole part of the phenomena that involves getting and trading cards, which doesn't exist on the computer. What we've done is create an adventure game around the card game that has that same quality to it: you're looking for cards, finding cards, finding ways to use cards you have. It creates that idea of scarcity and rarity of cards, and also puts you in this world."

Meier himself still writes much of his own code, and a team of 3D artists then places objects such as creatures and structures. The rendering on many of these — and there are a lot — looks fabulous.

Civilization creator Sid Meier added a new strategy element to the PC version of *Magic: The Gathering*.

That it now takes a team of artists and multimedia people to create a game that, years ago, lone programmers like Meier would have done with relatively little assistance, shows how much games changed.

Still, Meier believes that the rapid changes in technology haven't altered gameplay all that much. "I've tried to stay close to gameplay and fun. We certainly try to take some advantage of the additional memory, speed, colors — everything that comes together to make games better — but not to get distracted by the thought that 'Now we have to make movies.' We still make games, we just have better tools to do it with. It's the gameplay that keeps it going. Gameplay doesn't become obsolete. Graphics and sound may become obsolete, lots of things can look dated, but the gameplay gives it life."

That philosophy sounds an awful lot like the one that earned MicroProse its legendary status — and it looks like the folks in Maryland are ready to embrace it anew. That means 1996 might not only be a great year for MicroProse, but a great year for gamers, as well.

PCG

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES

Actual SVGA gameplay screen shots used.

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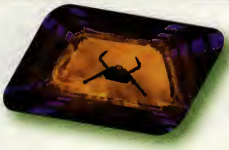

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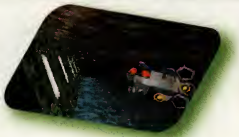

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DTP2

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Product Information Number 152

LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD GAMES

The U.S. Marines are taking a hard, professional look at PC games, which may have profound implications for the way this nation conducts military operations in the 21st Century — and for gaming in general.

by William R. Trotter

"Enemy in the wire! Rapid fire!"

I'm crouched in a two-man fighting hole next to Gunnery Sergeant Mark Englen, who's manning an M-60 machine gun. In other nearby holes are three other marines with M-16s: a four-man fire team, the smallest tactical unit in the United States Marine Corps' combat order-of-battle. Thirty meters away, a determined group of enemy soldiers is assaulting the fire team's defensive wire. The noise is terrific as Gunny Englen opens up with his weapon, cutting down the attackers to a man.

"Cease fire!" yells the fire team commander.

A hundred or so meters ahead are two small hillocks topped with fortified enemy blockhouses, sited to dominate a road junction that's vital to the current operation.

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Product Information Number 114

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The attack beaten off, the fire team's next objective is to secure those buildings with a counter-assault.

The non-commissioned officer in charge barks orders: "Corporal Sealy, you take the point! Gunny, slide to the right. We'll advance to contact in an echelon-left formation, slow walk until we reach those tree stumps, then take cover. We'll take the smaller building first. Everybody good?"

One by one the other Marines respond: "Check!"

"Okay, let's move out!"

We advance in eerie silence to a clump of artillery-mangled trees. Suddenly, there are flashes from the fortified buildings. Rounds impact the trees. We hit the dirt.

"Movement in the upper floor window. Watch it, there's a man firing from the west side of that bunker! Corporal Sealy, take him out, then put fire on that window. Keep 'em pinned!"

"Okay, I'm up!"

"Gunny, come up behind me and rush the south wall. Corporal Ford, move to the right! Stay dispersed, damn it, you're too close together!"

A series of short, sharp rushes, and we're at the first enemy bunker.

"Gunny, cover my six! I'm launching grenades!"

Explosions flash inside the enemy position; screams and shots, smoke and confusion. Suddenly, several enemy soldiers appear from the second bunker, spraying heavy fire.

"Oh, shit! Ambush! Let's get inside and clear this building, then regroup."

"I'm hit! I'm down!" calls one Marine. There's a sharp firefight inside the first structure, a room-by-room battle involving a lot of grenade-chucking. By the time the position is secured, much of the team's ammo's been burned up.

"Everybody report: how much ammo you got, Ford?"

"Thirty rounds!"

"Anybody got grenades left?"

Silence.

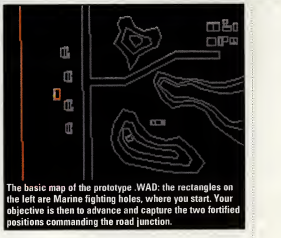
"Okay, here's what we're gonna do," says the fire team leader. "Form a skirmish line and wheel west. Sealy, you're on the right, Ford, you keep that sniper suppressed at the window, Gunny, move up behind me and cover my six. There's two guys in the open on the east side of that bunker — if we move to the left, we can get 'em!"

The AI is good: here, the enemy makes a sudden rush from their fortifications, and if you're not in the right formation to stop them, you can take some serious losses or even lose your entire fire team.

By the time the second enemy position is secured, I'm white-knuckled from the tension, breathing hard, and just as relieved as the Marines when the fire team leader calls out: "All objectives taken!" You can feel the tension drain, the adrenaline level drop.

I've seen training exercises before, but this fire-team skirmish has been more intense and realistic than anything in my experience.

I've just had my first taste of *Marine Doom*, and the exercise has been run, not in a mock-up outdoor battlefield with expensive targeting lasers, explosive simulators, and full field gear, but in a small, dimly lit room on the third floor of a World-War-Two-era building in the middle of Quantico, Virginia.



The basic map of the prototype .WAD; the rectangles on the left are Marine fighting holes, where you start. Your objective is then to advance and capture the two fortified positions commanding the road junction.

The "fire team" sits at separate networked computer consoles, each viewing the "battlefield" from a different perspective, while the team-leader's PC screen is projected on a larger screen at the front of the room. This is the heart of a new department called the Marine Corps Modeling and Simulation Management Command, and none of the other armed forces has anything quite like it ... yet.

These men have played this scenario many times before, but thanks to a well-developed AI opponent, and the multiple tactical options possible even in this simple layout, the battles go differently each time, and different lessons are learned.

A quick after-action discussion gives the team a chance to critique its performance: They used up their grenades too quickly and lost one man needlessly because of it; they need to work on dispersal; they got in each other's fields of fire too often, and fire discipline could use some work.

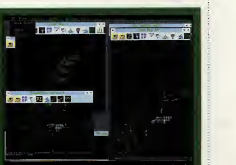
BROWSE THE CATALOG

Space-limited and deadline-stressed reviewers can only gaze upon the MCMSMO "Computer Based Tactical Decision Games Catalog" with envy — if we had unlimited time and space, *this* is how we'd like to cover games, breaking them down to the finest level of detail, and methodically evaluating every aspect of their design.

Interestingly, some of the "metrics" are the same as you'd find in any commercial game review: technical requirements, interface design, cost, and playability (the "fun factor"). Other categories of evaluation are much more technical ("Provide Operational Countermobility", "Acquire and Communicate Operational Level Information", etc.).

Games were evaluated by invited teams called "SMEs" ("Subject Matter Experts"), who put the games through the wringer from every conceivable specialized viewpoint before jointly issuing their ratings and general evaluation. As the catalog's introduction states: "Use these games to practice situational assessment, to consider and select courses of action,

Continued on Page 82



***Harpoon II* demands complex, real-time decision-making — part of the reason it did well in the Marines' evaluations.**

Enemy in the wire! *Marine Doom* begins with a desperate enemy assault which must be repelled before the mission can move into its counterattack phase.

I am reminded of what the fire-team leader said to me while he was booting up the network: "We train bloody so that our battles won't be."

Lieutenant Scott Barnett, Project Officer and one of the programmers of *Marine Doom*, the Corps' own version of PC gaming's most popular title, explains something of what his staff hopes to accomplish here:

"These kinds of tactical exercises traditionally have been done on a blackboard using Xs and Os, just like a football coach dry-running play options," Lt. Barnett says. "Very dry and boring stuff, and then the men went into the field and ran the planned exercise on real terrain — very costly. With this system, we bring a whole new dimension to the training experience.

"Because the men are having *fun*, they get more emotionally involved. Their imaginations are freed and they try dozens of different options, learning as they go what works and what doesn't. Then, when they do enter the field, they're much better prepared mentally, they have quicker responses, and they have much greater unit cohesion because they've all trained together in the system and had a ball while they were doing it.

"This is our first, rather primitive, *Doom* WAD," Lt. Barnett says, "but even so, it gives the infantryman a much better sense of the 'fog of war' factor, of the dangers of friendly fire, of the really amazing array of tactical options you have even in the simplest kind of firefight. Incidentally, we always set the 'health' level at 20 percent, so you can only take one or two hits before you're dead."

The lieutenant pulls a sheaf of blueprints from his desk and opens it to a drawing of the mock village used by both the Marines and the FBI for urban combat training.

Room-by-room fighting rehearsed by a fire team over the new *Marine Doom* network. Many of the NCOs and lieutenants who've drilled on the system are highly enthusiastic about its use as a training tool.

"Within a year, we hope to have this entire set-up programmed into the *Marine Doom* network, so we can conduct this same kind of training on a platoon, even a company level."

Looking into the future, Lt. Barnett envisions *Doom* add-on WADs based on the blueprints of all U.S. embassies that might become targets for terrorist attack. By feeding all available intelligence into the scenarios, a Marine rescue force can wargame their plans for the mission in exhaustive detail before going in. They'll actually know what the target facility looks like inside, from the rescue team's point of view, where the likeliest problems will occur, and what the enemy's possible responses might be.

At this point, my mind begins to boggle at the possibilities.

THE COLONEL MAKES HIS SALES PITCH

Colonel Paul E. Hanover, commander of the Modeling and Simulation Office, is an articulate, thoughtful officer whose enthusiasm for his new command is palpable. Over several cups of traditional, armor-piercing Marine coffee, he traces the genesis of the gaming program.

Col. Paul Hanover, head of the new USMC Modeling and Simulation Management Office, contemplates the future's possibilities.

There is a merging of technologies, he begins, that's enabled by the availability of the low-cost, high-speed processing power available to the PC user of today. These technologies are information-based, and they have to do with *decision-making*.

When the new Marine Corps Commandant (General Charles Krulak) came

BROWSE THE CATALOG

Continued from Page 81

and to respond to unexpected deviations from your plan. Understand, throughout it all, that your objective is to 'think better, not to 'know more.'"

New games are constantly being evaluated, but among the earliest titles to make the cut-list were: *Harpoon II, Operation Crusader, Patriot, Tigers on the Prowl*, and *V for Victory: Market Garden.*

Here's an example of the SME evaluation of *Operation Crusader:*

In reviewers' dreams, every game's rating would be broken into as many categories as the Corps used to rate *Operation Crusader.*

- **Artificial Intelligence Level of Computer Opponent ..... High**
- **Overall Realism ..... High**
- **Scenario Location (Map) Flexibility ..... Medium**
- **Scenario Order of Battle (Unit) Flexibility ..... Medium**
- **Scenario Data Flexibility ..... Low**
- **Length of Time Required to Play ..... Medium**
- **Game Speed Adjustable ..... No**
- **Enjoyment ..... High**
- **Completeness of Documentation ..... Very**
- **Accuracy of Documentation ..... High**
- **Existence of Tutorial ..... Yes**

Continued on Page 84

Flamin' Yawn trashed my house.
Psycrow stole my lady.
I've got a backpack full of snott.
This ain't gonna be no picnic.
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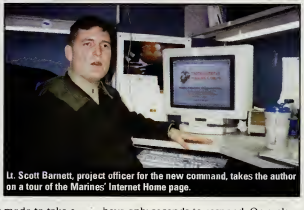
Product Information Number 146

The Corps is still evaluating PC games, but *Command & Conquer* has some of the qualities they're looking for.

aboard, he called a conference of general officers, in September, 1994, and among the topics discussed was the vital requirement for some sort of very frequent training exercise in decision-making, at all levels of the Corps.

"Everybody saw the emerging technological dynamic," continues Col. Hanover, "but the question was: what impact would it have — could it have — on us? The decision was made to take a hard look at commercially available PC-based products and evaluate their possible relevance to the Marines, from a war-fighting standpoint. So the group assigned to this task was given the charter to go forth and search the world for 'games,' in the broadest sense of the word, which would have potential merit to Marine Corps decision-making training."



Lt. Scott Barnett, project officer for the new command, takes the author on a tour of the Marines' Internet Home page.

The object was to develop a catalog of approved games and simulations for the Corps.

"We quickly learned that there was as much fluff as substance out there," Col. Hanover says, "and realized there was, in some products, a potential for negative learning. So we developed a series of 'metrics' — filters, if you will — in order to test the value of the games in terms of their relevance to Marine Corps decision-making training."

One of the prime "metrics" a game had to display was a sense of *tempo* — that is, the games the Corps wanted had to have a "time-based stress element," because in real warfare, of course, the action is not "turn-based," and you don't have unlimited time to ponder your next move.

That's where one of the complications set in, the colonel says.

"On a squad or fire-team level, at the point of actual enemy contact, you have only seconds to respond. On a platoon or company level, you may have ten minutes to a half-hour to plan your next actions. And, of course, at the operational level, you may have days to prepare. And since we were looking to train everybody from privates to generals, we had to consider all of these levels."

So far, Hanover maintains, the Corps has not found a really satisfying operational-level game, although both *Panzer General* and *Command & Conquer* are well-liked and have useful operational elements in them. (*Editor's note:* The specific games mentioned in this feature are not in any way officially endorsed by the Marine Corps; the games they've evaluated so far are too numerous to list). So now, Hanover's command is in the preliminary stages of designing their own operational-level game, code-named "BRUTE" (an insider's homage to the nickname of General Krulak's father, one of the Corps' most legendary warriors).

At this time, the game description is being finalized, after which bids will be taken from outside contractors. The design parameters include:

- Realistic simulation of the operation-level of warfare;
- Incorporation of a time-stress factor and suitable tempo;
- A high "fun factor" that will make the individual *want* to keep playing.

"So, basically, our requirements are not too different from those of a good commercial wargame," Col. Hanover says. "The game won't do anybody any good if nobody wants to keep playing it. There are of course operational simulations that the Pentagon has developed, at enormous expense, but they're so dull and pedantic that *nobody* wants to sit down and play them. Our game must be both professionally and personally enjoyable, not something to be done under duress."

THE ARMY HAS A DIFFERENT PLAN

I mentioned to Col. Hanover that I had heard rumors of a substantial conceptual conflict between the Corps and the U.S. Army as to how the emerging PC-based technologies ought to be employed. When I first heard about the matter, I was reminded of the classic argument in the 1920s between the "battleship men" and the "carrier men," and the profound impact that debate had on this nation's ability to wage World War Two.

The stories were true, Col. Hanover admitted, although doctrinal disputes between the Marines and the Army are nothing new.

"The Army is an *armor-based* force," Col. Hanover said. "Its operations center around the M-1 Abrams

BROWSE THE CATALOG

Continued from Page 82

• Importance of tempo to Game Play .....Low

Final SME Evaluation: "*Operation Crusader* is highly regarded among wargaming enthusiasts. It is equally well thought of by the SMEs who have tested and alavualted it. Minor bugs have been experienced when loading the game — which could have been attributed to a corrupt evaluation copy — and when attempting E-mail play.

The bugs notwithstanding, *Operation Crusader* is historically accurate and superior to its contemporaries due to the E-mail capability and fog of war feature."

Interestingly, the Marines' require-

The Marines are looking at tons of PC wargames, but *Tigers on the Prowl* is one of the games that has made the cut so far.

ments don't always mesh with of gamers; *Patriot* received a very high evaluation, even though most reviewers regarded it as virtually unplayable and terminally boring.

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Product Information Number 147

Panzer General isn't exactly hard-core, but it's another game being considered for the program.

tank and the Bradley fighting vehicle, and when the Army talks of "force projection," they're basically talking about armored units with associated dismounted infantry."

Marine Corps doctrine has always been focused on the infantryman, whose actions are supported by organic aviation, artillery, and offshore naval gunfire. "We have tanks, too, of course, but the *density* of our armor is very thin compared to the Army; we're a quick-response, amphibious force, and armor is damned heavy to move. If we had too much of it, we're no longer 'quick response.'"

The Army sees the emerging technology as a means of building a kind of "exoskeleton" around the ground soldier, in effect turning him into kind of a walking sensor-array covered with satellite antennas, special goggles, all sorts of Buck Rogers devices.

Input from those high-tech grunts, according to emerging Army doctrine, passes into a data-stream and ends up in headquarters where it is displayed and arrayed so as to give the commanders, ideally, an omniscient, God-eye-view of what's happening on the battlefield. Orders will then go back down the net and all those potent wedges of M-1s and Bradley's will move accordingly, exerting massive firepower at the point of engagement.

"We want to be high-tech, too," comments Col. Hanover, "but we want our stuff tiny and light, so a Marine who's jumping out of an amphibious landing craft and has to wade through twenty meters of surf to the beach, under hostile fire, simply can't be burdened with an electronic exoskeleton."

What the Corps hopes to achieve, through its new training techniques, is a force of infantry superbly equipped mentally to manage supporting firepower and to envision the total situation in the midst of chaotic violence. The hypothetical 21st Century Marine won't weigh much more than he does today, but he'll be much more effective at commanding and controlling the lethality of the Marine Corps' traditional supporting arms.

LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

In the long term, the value of the new Modeling and Simulation program will impart training that will give the 21st Century Marine a much greater situational awareness of the context of the firefight he's engaged in. The hundreds of hours he's spent playing PC games will give him a better mind-set, quicken his responses, make him more intuitive.

"It boils down to *empowerment* of the individual soldier," says Major Bruce Gudmunsson, a military historian who's head of the Quantico-based Institute for Tactical Education (a research and consulting firm not part of the Marine Corps, but with close ties to everything that goes on at Quantico).

"The Marine Corps has a long tradition of being the most innovative of the services, the ones most willing to try something experimental and see what happens. One of the reasons, of course, is that they're always having to fight for their share of the money pie against the bigger services, so they've *had* to be innovative. This concept of using PC games for training can have enormous benefit at relatively low cost to the tax payer.

"Look at it this way: a Marine whose spent hundreds of hours training on PC games will go into battle empowered with a larger sense of the situation. He won't be limited to thinking: hey, I'm in this particular firefight, and I'm only concerned with killing and surviving. He'll also be aware, from his gaming experience, that, hey, if I move my platoon 500 meters north, I'll cut the enemy's supply line, or, if I make that long, flanking march I was contemplating, I'll suddenly be beyond the range of my supporting fires. In short, *his head will be in a better place* for having had that PC training."

Col. Hanover sums things up in a similar vein: "A young lieutenant whose mistakes in PC games have cost him hundreds of hit points and lost 'lives' will have a more seasoned understanding of the *synchroncity* issues of the battlefield, the interdependence of supporting arms and effective fire, the interdependence of logistics and force mobility, enormously complex matters in modern warfare.

"Our hope is that he will have learned these deadly-serious military skills in a *fun* environment, and that, God forbid, if he finds himself in real combat, he's ready to apply things he's already learned, not just desperately scrambling to learn things he *needs* to know. He'll be in situations that validate all his keyboard time. His cognitive processes will have an extra edge, and on the battlefield of the future, that's going to be critical."

The Colonel finishes our interview with a slightly rueful smile. "Of course, we're still struggling to find the funding to expand our operation, and I suppose that's never going to change. Before you go, could you write us a check for, say, ten thousand high-end computers?"

We share a laugh, of course — but as a PC gamer, an historian, *and* a stressed-out taxpayer, I come away from my day at Quantico convinced that the Marines are on to something very big here, a highly cost-effective means of significantly improving this nation's ability to conduct military operations for the next century or more.

(*Editor's note:* For more on the military and wargaming, see this month's Desktop General column on page 157.)

PCG

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Internet users can access the Marine Corps web site at the following address: *http://www.usmc.mil*.

In addition to bulletin-board information of interest to Marines, both active and retired, accessing the web site allows you to download the prototype *Marine Doom* WAD and to post scenario ideas for new WADs. I told Lt. Barnett to brace himself for a deluge of ideas from *Doom* addicts.

Commercial game companies who would like to have their products evaluated for incorporation into the MCMSMO catalog (and for possible future licensing as training programs — a not inconsiderable market, mind you), should submit boxed, shrink-wrapped copies of their games (not beta versions; the small staff is too overwhelmed with work to cope with them at this stage of things) to:

Lieutenant Scott Barnett,
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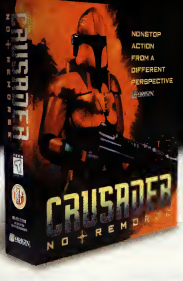

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How to be a game reviewer

Every so often, one of our eager readers will ask the age-old question, "How can I become a game reviewer, and earn the respect and admiration of my friends and family and the honor of being able to say I have the coolest job in the world?" But since most of us basically lucked (or blackmailed) our way into our positions, we're not really sure how to answer these requests. Still, after a lot of finger-pointing and name-calling, we've narrowed down a few common personality traits and skills that seem to lead to success in gaming.

1 CLEANLINESS: You wouldn't think daily hygiene would be a big factor in becoming a game reviewer, but as they say, keeping clean isn't just for presidents and clergymen anymore. To make this daily ritual a little more fun, amuse yourself with an assortment of bath toys, and soon you'll be on your way to gaming excitement.

2 ENTHUSIASM: If you get a whiskey-soaked, half-crazed, Yosemite Sam gleam in your eye whenever someone mentions the latest and greatest computer game, there's probably a bright future for you in gaming. If you get the same gleam whenever someone mentions gardening supplies, perhaps some sleepy-time in a nice, quiet home is more your speed.

3 TECHNICAL SAVVY: Keeping up with advances in technology is a basic requirement for reviewing games. So here's a simple test to see if you have the know-how to become a game reviewer: Your TV set is too loud. Do you A) Cower in fear because the tiny elves that make the funny pictures on the screen are angry; B) Calmly push the television into a closet until it learns to behave; or C) Pull the wire with the funny-shaped end out of the electrical socket? If you answered yes to any of the above, happiness through gaming is just a stone's throw away.

4 HEARTLESSNESS: Having little or no concern for your fellow man is a big requirement for reviewing games, and this, in turn, helps you maintain the staunch editorial integrity that drives the kids wild. Here's an example to go by: After being wined and dined by a company's public relations team, you'll need a self-assured, cavalier attitude to tell them that their game is as appealing as watching yellow matter custard dripping from a dead dog's eye (as the Beatles would say). Basically, if you're the type of person that would rip the head off your grandmother's lucky bingo troll just to watch her cry, you're the type of person we're looking for.

Hardware Requirements

With each *PC Gamer* review, you'll find two very important pieces of information: the game's minimum hardware requirements and the hardware configurations we recommend as the *least* you'll need to really enjoy the game. While a game will run on the minimum system the manufacturer specifies, it might not run all that well. Because of this, we test each game on several systems so we can bring you a more realistic assessment of what you'll *really* need.

THE PC GAMER RATINGS SYSTEM

100%-90% CLASSIC
Not many games can earn a rating over 90%, and even fewer can approach the magic 100. Anything that we rate over 90% is an instant classic — a game that's truly significant in both content and design, and one that we'd recommend without reservation to anyone interested in PC gaming.

89%-80% EXCELLENT
These are excellent games. Anything that scores in this range is well worth your attention, though it may not make any significant advances over its rivals. Also, some genuine benchmark games of decidedly specialist taste will fall into this area — it may be the best 7th Cavalry simulation on the market, but not all of us want to relive Little Bighorn.

79%-70% VERY GOOD
These are pretty good games, which we would recommend to fans of the particular genre — although it's a safe bet that there are probably better games out there.

69%-60% GOOD
A reasonable, above-average game. It may be worth buying, but probably has a few significant flaws that keep it from earning a higher rating.

59%-50% FAIR
Very ordinary games. Not completely worthless, but not a very good way to spend your gaming dollar, either.

49%-40% BELOW AVERAGE
Poor quality. Only a few, slightly redeeming features keep them from falling into the abyss of the next category...

39%-0% DON'T BOTHER
Just terrible games — and the lower you go, the worse they get. Avoid these titles like the Plague — and don't say we didn't warn you!

PC Gamer Editors' Choice Awards

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Every month, we honor the best games we see — those earning 88% or above — with our Editors' Choice award. It's not easy to earn, and there are a lot of excellent games that fall just short of the honor. So when you see the *PCG* Editors' Choice logo on a game at a local software shop, you can bet it's among the best.

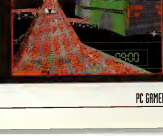
ALLIED GENERAL p.109

CYBERMAGE p.95

HYPER 3-D PINBALL p.138

THE BEAST WITHIN: A GABRIEL KNIGHT MYSTERY p.92

ZONE RAIDERS p.130



The Beast Within: A Gabriel

Category: Adventure game

Developer: Sierra

Publisher: Sierra, P.O.Box 85006, Bellevue, WA 98105-8506 (206) 649-9800

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; 20MB hard-disk space; Mouse; SVGA	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM

Most gamers considered the original *Gabriel Knight* the best horror game ever published, but this spectacular sequel dethrones it.

The Music Room in Neuschwanstein — heve Grece examine *all* of the "wolf paintings" here; it's a very important event-trigger.

The Beast Within, opens with a scene straight out classic monster pictures of yore: Horror writer Gabriel Knight has returned to his ancestral castle in Germany, Schloss Ritter, and is quietly pursuing his own affairs when a crowd of local citizens appears at his door, *lederhosen* and all, with news that the daughter of a local farmer has been slain by a werewolf.

The good burghers of Rittersberg know that Gabriel is a *schattenjaeger*, a "shadow-hunter," with special powers for combating the forces of darkness, so they've come to him for help. Naturally, Gabriel takes the case.

You don't have to progress far in the game to realize than *GK2* is no ordinary werewolf yarn. Gabriel (along with his doughty assistant, Grace, who flies over from New Orleans to lend a hand) soon finds himself enmeshed in a complex web of characters and events, with side-plots involving illegal animal smuggling, an exclusive hunting club of wealthy Bavarian snobs, a lost opera by Richard Wagner, and the romantic but tormented history of Bavaria's last king, the eccentric — some would say insane — Ludwig II.

All the skeins of the fabulously intricate plot gradually come together to reach two extremely powerful climaxes: a nocturnal werewolf hunt in the Bavarian woods (by all means, save your *game* before embarking on this perilous affair — it's one of the toughest challenges I've ever encountered in an adventure game), and a truly spectacular production of the "lost" Wagner opera, which serves as the backdrop for Gabriel's final confrontation with evil, both external and internal.

There are significant differences between this sequel and its predecessor, *Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Father*. This is an interactive movie, not an animated game; it is neither as difficult nor as long as the original (although even experienced gamers will find plenty to challenge their wits); it relies heavily on *mood* to create its sense of menace; and it uses real actors.

Some players may not respond well to Dean Erickson's interpretation of Gabriel, who was animated, cartoon-style, in the previous game: he looks a lot like Kurt Russell, brushes his long hair back much too often, and tends to rely on his "Aw, shucks!" smirk too much whenever there's a second of dead-time while the next scene loads.

Others may find him charming and lovable: when the script calls for stronger emotions, he certainly can provide them, and this helps compensate for his over-reliance on acting-class mannerisms.

Joanne Takahashi, however, simply runs away with the part of Grace. She gives us a young woman of spunk, wit,

SOME TIPS FOR THE FLEDGLING SCHATTENJAEGER

Here's a good example of how the "event trigger" system works in the game — and how it can be a problem if there's a misfire:

Grace needs information from the curator of the Wagner Museum in Bayreuth about the "wolf panels" in the castle Neuschwanstein, and about the lost Wagner opera. In the Ludwig Museum at Herrenchiemsee, there is a letter from Ludwig to the conductor of the Munich Opera about those topics; there are also a lot of other letters and documents that Grace needs to read. So many, in fact, that the player is likely to read them silently, rather than have Grace read them aloud, to speed things along.

But that particular letter from Ludwig *must* be read aloud, or the "trigger" won't be tripped and the topics it addresses will never show up in the conversation tree. Consequently, when Grace talks to the Wagner Museum curator, she won't be able to ask the right questions. This is a program-

In Display Room No. 1 at the Ludwig Museum, in Herrenchiemsee, Grace *must* read the leftmost letter aloud in order to trigger important topics of conversation when she later visits the Wagner Museum in Bayreuth.

ming glitch — to be corrected in a patch — but you *must* let Grace read the letter aloud, or you'll get stuck in a dead-end loop and your progress through the game will take a major wrong turn.

Knight Mystery

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

In one of the game's most moving scenes, Grace visits the spot where Ludwig II drowned (probably with the assistance of some thugs from the Prussian secret service).

Neuschwanstein — Ludwig II's most extravagant dream-palace. *GK2* takes full advantage of Bavaria's many beauties. Rarely has there been a game so drenched in sheer atmosphere.

determination, and exceptional screen presence. She's also deep-down beautiful (I think I'm in love...).

Video quality is first-rate, and the use of music to heighten mood — and, indeed, to provide reinforcement to the players' actions — is cunningly done. Hats off to composer Robert Holmes: I've been a Wagner fan since high school, and damned if his "lost Wagner opera" doesn't sound authentic!

And the location scenes in Bavaria are often ravishing to behold. By the time you finish the game, you'll be an expert on Munich and on the fairy-tale castles built by Ludwig in the alps surrounding the city.

The real star of *GK2*, however, is writer Jane Jensen, who also scripted the first Gabriel Knight game. Her characterizations are sharp and economical, her dialogue sparkles, and her subtle way of weaving German myth and legend into the story, in an ever-darkening crescendo of mood, would be the envy of any big-name horror writer you care to mention.

Jensen does not give us the sunny, jet-set Bavaria of the travel posters, but the *old* Bavaria of dark forests and legend-haunted mists. I once fantasized writing a historical novel about Ludwig II (it's been done, of course), and I was spellbound by the way in which this lonely but noble figure gradually emerges as a major character in *The Beast Within*'s plot, even though he's been dead for more than a century. There is a scene where Grace evokes the spirit of the (probably) murdered monarch that moved me as much as anything I've ever seen in a computer game. Writing of such quality is rare in any format, and in PC games, it's almost never to be found.

There's a formidable paradox involved in writing horror for the interactive genre: gamers must have their puzzles and conundrums, but since successful horror depends so much on the steady building of atmosphere (it ain't enough anymore just to have a dismembered corpse pop up every now and then), the trick is to integrate the event-triggers (industry term for the-things-you-must-do-in-the-right-order in order to make progress in the game) into the plot so that they break the mood as little as possible. Jensen has managed that tightrope act with skill and aplomb.

The game is structured in six chapters, alternating between Grace's point of view and Gabriel's, until the sixth and final chapter, when their paths merge. It's an effective way of telling a story which might otherwise become unwieldy in its mass of detail.

One technical note: Sierra lists a double-speed CD-ROM drive as one of the hardware requirements for *The Beast Within*, but a quad-speed is probably a more realistic minimum. This is the first game I've been assigned to review that my three-year-old Panasonic double-speed CD drive just couldn't handle. The amounts of data being transferred in numerous full-motion video scenes are simply too much for some older drives — I was crashing every 20 minutes or so because my drive just choked on the data-stream and shut itself down. I went out and bought a new quad-speed drive, and after that, things went smoothly. (Okay, I was planning to buy one sooner or later, but it tells you something about how powerful the game is that I actually did it *now*, just so I could finish this one game!).

In fact, I devoured this game as I would a good horror novel — which, in a sense, it is. Sierra learned a lot about this kind of game in the process of making *Phantasmagoria*, and it shows.

Breathtaking visual impact, across-the-board good acting, a complex and engrossing story that builds to a truly horrific climax: *The Beast Within* sets a new standard — within the graphic adventure genre, at any rate — for interactive entertainment.

—*William R. Trotter*

ON THE HUNT

There's a locked door Gabriel need to get through to explore the hunting lodge's basement. Have him wind the cuckoo clock and hide it in the big plant.

When the woodpecker in the clock begins to "knock," the sound will distract the snooty doorman, Xavier, long enough for Gabriel to snatch a set of keys from his desk.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

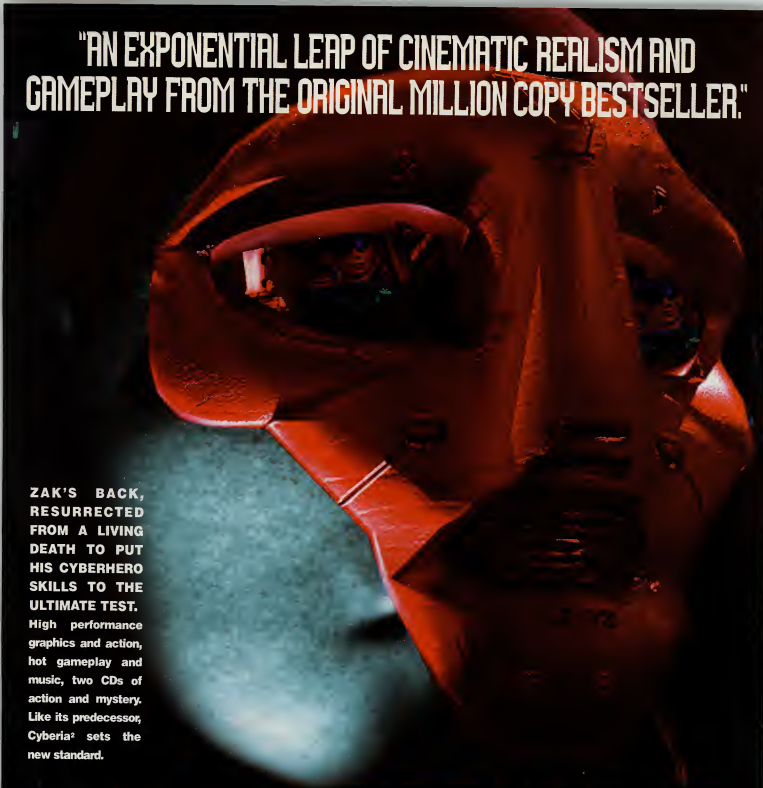
96%

HIGHS: Superb script, excellent videos, a fresh "take" on the traditional werewolf theme.

LOWS: Extreme system demands; if you get hooked on it, you may have to invest in a quad-speed CD-ROM drive, whether you're ready to or not.

BOTTOM LINE: A great horror adventure, driven by a script that puts the competition to shame.

"AN EXPONENTIAL LEAP OF CINEMATIC REALISM AND GAMEPLAY FROM THE ORIGINAL MILLION COPY BESTSELLER."



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CYBERIA 2 <<RESURRECTION>>

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Product Information Number 179

CyberMage

Category: Action Adventure

Developer: Origin

Publisher: Origin, 5918 Courtyard Dr., Austin, TX 78730 (512) 434-4263

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; 10MB hard-drive space; Sound Blaster or supported sound card	Pentium 90; 16MB RAM; Local-bus Super VGA video card

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Origin's 3D super-hero spectacular strikes a balance between action and adventuring.

I first encountered *CyberMage* as a demo at the Electronic Entertainment Expo in May of last year. Someone at the Electronic Arts-Origin booth invited me to try it out, and — for a few minutes, at least — the whole Expo disappeared while I learned to use my awesome weapons and darklight powers to fight evil as a futuristic super-hero. The other guys from *PC Gamer* had to pry my hands off the controls, and I came away from that Los Angeles show thinking *CyberMage* was one of the three or four most promising games I'd seen there.

The next time I played the game was during a visit to Origin's offices in Austin — I was there to do a story on the Apache Longbow attack-helicopter sim they were developing, but I stole a few moments between meetings to meet the people testing *CyberMage* and to play the game again. I left Texas with two strong feelings: that helicopter sim was probably going to be great — and, by God, I was going to be the one to review *CyberMage* when we finally got a final copy. It's a terrific game; I couldn't wait to get my hands on it, and I was sorry when I finished it.

I could go on at length about the spectacular visuals and sound effects in *CyberMage*, but these days, saying a game from Origin has great graphics and sounds is a little like saying a zebra has stripes.

It's enough to say that — if your system has the horsepower to run them, and we're talking about at least a Pentium 90 with 16MB RAM — the high-resolution, Super VGA graphics in *CyberMage* are the most impressive we've seen so far in a *Doom*-style, smooth-scrolling, first-person game. And the wide range of booming, stereo sound effects rank right up there, too. But high production values aren't what makes *CyberMage* such a joy.

More than anything else, it's *CyberMage*'s balance between faced-paced, non-stop shoot-'em-up action and an intriguing, graphic-adventure-style story line that earned it an Editors' Choice rating.

CyberMage casts the gamer as a near-future super-hero, brought to life to fight a comic-book bad-guy called NeCrom and his armies. Seems an alien race known as the Sri Feng foolishly gave NeCrom the powers of darklight — a mystical energy of great destructive power — and now he's out of control, hoping to take over The City and, eventually, The World. Your task, of course, is to master the powers of darklight — along with a huge and varied arsenal of futuristic weapons — and stop NeCrom.

You do that by battling your way through ten levels, each with a distinct goal, as in *Dark Forces*. You're not just scrambling from one end of a maze to another, looking for the button marked "Exit" — in one level, you've got to raise enough cash to enter a fight-to-the-death in the Arena; in another, you're rescuing an army of captured comrades from a crooked police force under NeCrom's control. All the levels have a distinctive look and atmosphere; the DMZ level, in particular, creates a surprisingly effective

A High-Power Joy-ride

An abandoned tank waits for you in the DMZ. It's an opportunity you can't pass up...

...so off you go, ready to create mayhem in air-conditioned splendor!

Ouch! A crooked MetaCop, one of NeCrom's minions, does the dance of death on the end of an Electroscism, one of the spells you learn to cast as the hero in *CyberMage*.

CyberGear

CyberMage's mix of sci-fi and fantasy means you'll get to play with a huge assortment of futuristic weapons and powerful spells. Here are some of the more useful ones:

LASER PISTOL

This is the first non-magical weapon you'll find. It comes in handy when you're low on spell power, but it doesn't do as much damage as your most basic magical attack.

BLAST RIFLE

This one has a low rate of fire, but it packs a real wallop, especially at close range. It's sort of the equivalent of *Doom*'s shotgun; it's not the most powerful weapon in the game, but you'll probably find yourself using it more than any other.

PLASMA GUN

This weapon's popular with the enemy for the damage it does, but it's tricky to use; the spheres of destructive energy it fires move pretty slowly, so you've got to either lead your target well or unleash a wall of fire at him.

ROCKET GUN

You get just what you'd expect from this puppy: a fast-moving, high-explosive rocket that can deal the bad guys a world of hurt. The drawback is that it'll mess you up almost as bad as the enemy if you try to use it at close range.

HEAVY BLASTER MACHINE GUN

This is the king-daddy version of the Blast Rifle. It fires a similarly lethal round, but does it with rapid-fire abandon. There are more powerful weapons to be had, but it'll do a nasty job on any baddies you encounter — short of NeCrom himself.

STARBOLT

This simple darklight spell is the only weapon you'll have at the start of *CyberMage*. Once you get more powerful spells, you probably won't go back to this one.

ELECTROCISM

You get this spell pretty early in the game, but it'll probably be your favorite right to the end. It wraps a destructive charge around your enemy and paralyzes him for as long as it lasts, so he can't do you any harm. Best of all, you can hit a bad guy with more than one of these babies at a time.

PRISMA

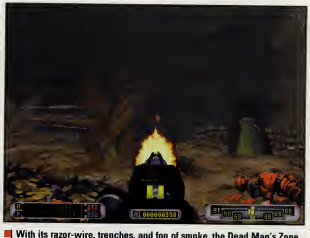
Pretty but painful, this spell can be as dangerous to you as it is to the bad guys. Fire away, but keep your distance from it.

NOVA

You'll like this one if you like big bangs, but it uses a bunch of your power with each shot, and it carries the same close-range danger as the rocket gun.

feeling of being thrown into the middle of a major battle, as explosive tank shells land all around you and brave rebel soldiers fall dead in the trenches (in the case of *CyberMage*, DMZ stands for Dead Man's Zone; it's most definitely not a Demilitarized Zone).

On each level, you blast away at plenty of bad guys, but you've also got to solve a number of puzzles and get information from friendly characters you meet, just as you would in a graphic adventure.



With its razor-wire, trenches, and fog of smoke, the Dead Man's Zone creates an eerie feeling of being a small part of a much bigger battle.

CyberMage doesn't have quite the depth of story you'd find in a straightforward adventure — your interaction with the other characters always amounts to just listening while they talk, but it's encouraging to find a first-person shooter in which you're not simply killing everything that moves.

This interaction does occasionally become problematic, though — the speeches your allies make are frequently long-winded, and the action continues around you. It can be frustrating, trying to stay alive and keep the enemy at bay while your old buddy Pawn rattles on about your next mission, oblivious to the carnage around him. It's actually comical, at times; you can run down a hall and around a corner, trying to find shelter from the bad guys, and you'll hear the other guy's voice fading into the distance — but you can't make him shut up and wait until the shooting stops. Fortunately, anything important that's said to you is stored in your personal log, which means you can replay it at your leisure when the smoke clears. Still, it's an unfortunate bit of clunkiness in a game that's put together so well.

Another problem arises from the adventure-game aspect of *CyberMage*, and again it seems to be the result of a little bad planning: Not too far into the game, you'll need to use a hovercar to reach a secret entrance to the DMZ. That may not be a problem; you used a stolen police vehicle to break into MetaCop headquarters earlier in the game, and it may be right where you left it.

On the other hand, you may have had that hovercar shot out from under you just before or after your adventures at MetaCop, and there doesn't seem to be another working, unoccupied hovercar anywhere in the game, nor any other way to reach the DMZ entrance. So in order to move forward in the game, you may just have to move backward — and replay two of the game's longest, most complex levels. It's the kind of problem that would be nearly inexcusable in a full-fledged adventure game, and it's almost as hard to accept in a game like *CyberMage*. (Of course, now you've been forewarned about it, so you'll know to make sure you leave a nice, healthy hovercar waiting for you before you enter MetaCop. And if you don't run into the hovercar problem, you'll more than likely find *CyberMage* pretty trouble-free.)

Be sure to win yourself a wad of cash at the casino, then spend it all at the weapons shop.

Of course, interaction and depth of story aren't really what *CyberMage* is about. First and foremost, it's an action game, with plenty of spell-casting and trigger-pulling to do. By the time you face NeCrom on his own turf (in a satisfying, drawn-out showdown that's very evocative of the game's comic-hero inspiration), you will have driven at least two heavy tanks and one stolen police hovercar, and racked up about as many kills as you did in *Doom* or *Doom II*. Ultimately, *CyberMage* is a very effective blend of gaming genres; it's less than a complex adventure or RPG, but it's much more than just another 3D shooter. Whether you're a fan of *Doom* and its genre or Origin's own excellent *System Shock*, you'll like this new game. And if, like most of us at *PCG*, you thought both those games were great, you'll love *CyberMage*.

—*Dan Bennett*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

92%

HIGHS: Gorgeous graphics, excellent sound effects; a very effective blend of action and adventure.

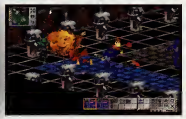
LOWS: Not a lot of interaction with other characters; pretty steep hardware requirements.

BOTTOM LINE: A fantastic mix of all the best elements from several gaming genres.

What you get when you mix cyborgs & big ass guns.

TOTAL MAYHEM
COMING SOON!

HEAD TO HEAD
NETWORK PLAY



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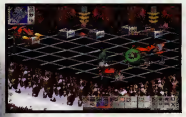

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Product Information Number 106

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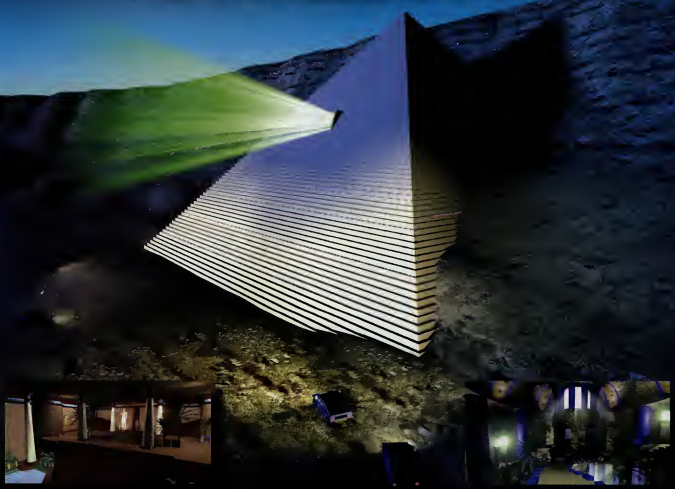

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Product Information Number 175

NOVA SPRING

Terminator: Future Shock

Category: First-person shooter

Developer: Bethesda Softworks

Publisher: Bethesda Softworks, 1370 Piccard Dr., Rockville, MD 20850 (301) 926-8300

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/50; 8MB RAM; 20MB hard-drive space	Pentium; 16MB RAM; Mouse; Joystick; Supported sound card

Whether you're on foot, in a car, or in the air, you'll have your hands full with Bethesda's new action-packed Terminator game.

In the past few years, I can't think of a science fiction film that's been as highly regarded or as widely seen as the two Terminator films. For Bethesda Softworks, this wide-spread appeal was the basis for a semi-successful series of titles that brought the Terminator universe to the PC. Almost in spite of terrific visual and story line fodder, their first effort, *Terminator: 2029*, was a frustrating, often impossibly difficult game with a confused keyboard and mouse control interface, while the follow-up, *Terminator: Rampage*, released at the height of the *Doom* craze, failed to distinguish itself with flat, lackluster graphics.

Well, as the old saying goes: third time's the charm. Bethesda's latest offering, *Terminator: Future Shock*, is a damned fine game in many ways, with lots of gameplay, sharp graphics, and a heavy dose of destruction. The story setup is immediately familiar and hardly worth repeating if you've seen the popular films, but here goes: it is 2015, and the war between the humans and the robots of Skynet rages on. You are a new member of John Connor's human resistance force, with the task of doing your best to break Skynet's hold on humanity.

The missions in *Future Shock* reflect this struggle against Skynet's army of automated oppressors and are carried out in a number of ways. Whether it's rescuing prisoners, destroying radar installations, or clearing a landing zone, you'll get caught up in the tension of the moment. Much of the game takes place in the blasted landscape of a city, with buildings in ruins and a maze of wrecked cars and smoldering fires. Large portions of the landscape are radioactive, and when you wander into them, you quickly lose health (a pretty clever way of putting the necessary boundaries on the game world, actually). You also travel into buildings and below ground, sometimes meeting people, but more often just killing Skynet robots.

On the graphic side, *Terminator* is a little darker than most gamers would probably like, but it seems to suit the mood of the overall conflict. Adding to the sinister feel is a host of characters that are modeled in full 3D, and killer sound effects which have a nice, directional feel to them. But what makes *TFS* unique is its engine, which delivers three distinct modes — walking, driving, and flying — to add diversity to the game. Most missions are handled on foot, though — and here you can run, crouch, jump, and even look up and down: a popular feature in several recent would-be *Doom*-killers.

You'll only hear the whine of their engines and feel the pain of incoming fire until you learn to watch the skies — then you can start shooting at the various hunter-killer ships in the city.

The perspective from your car: Trying to get a bead on the turret that's cutting you to shreds can be tough, and controlling your car is a tricky process.

The difference, however, is that your shots aren't automatically aimed as in *Dark Forces* or *Hexen*; *Terminator* is much less forgiving in this respect. You have to carefully use the head up/head down keys to lay your aiming reticle or laser sight *directly* on the target; getting reasonably close isn't good enough, unless you're chucking grenades. This means that not only do you have to move and shoot, but also aim — and getting a solid bead on a moving target can often be a chore. This isn't helped by the confusing controls: while CTRL for firing weapons and the Spacebar for using doors and items have become part of the *de facto* standard in first-person

Sons of Schwarzenegger

Arnold's bad-guy-turned-good from the movies doesn't make an appearance (although there are some of the creepy endoskeletons later in the game), but that doesn't mean *TFS* is without a surfeit of nasties. Here are a few you'll run into right away:

Seeker

These little buggers are mostly a nuisance, but enough of them can chip away at armor and health over time until you're weak enough for the nastier 'bots to finish you off. They're basically floating mines that drift towards humans. A shot or two from a distance is enough to put them out of the game.

Hunter-Killer Scout

Don't let their small size deceive you: these little robots are fast and tend to fire while moving, making them tough targets. Worse, they can summon other 'bots to your area once they've spotted you, making them high-priority targets. They are small enough to fly into structures and tunnels.

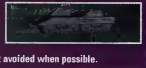
Hunter-Killer Fighter

Though lightly armored, the H/K Fighter is equipped with a fair amount of firepower, both fore and aft. Unlike the Scouts, they tend to stand still while shooting, making them easier targets.

Drone

Akin to the H/K Scout, the Drone is an even smaller and weaker type of recon vehicle. They only attack when close and have a single laser, making them no huge threat.

Heavy Tank



You don't want to run into these babies on foot, and probably not in the car, either. They have very thick armor and pack a strong blast, so they're best avoided when possible.

Raptor

The most common robot you'll find early on, the Raptors are quick and can close in on you in a few strides. They fire a double-blast laser and can do enough damage to make them a priority.

Spiderbot

The Spiderbot may not move quickly, but it can maneuver over the roughest terrain. A thick skin and a nasty attack make them one of the most dreaded things you'll encounter.

Turrets

Though their twin guns often turn slowly, once these automated turrets have a bead on you, they won't stop firing until you're toast. A couple of hits to the top with a beam weapon usually takes care of them.

The 3D automap is beautiful, but it's hard to read and all but useless for finding your way around the city.

You'll have a variety of weapons at your disposal to destroy SkyNet's robot army, including this high-powered assault rifle, which turns a Raptor into scrap metal.

shooters, Bethesda uses a tricky jumble of keyboard commands for various actions. (Fortunately, you can reconfigure the keyboard to suit your tastes.) When you use the keyboard in conjunction with the mouse or joystick, aiming and firing does become simpler, but it's an unfamiliar interface that will take some practice.

A wide array of beam and conventional weapons, including those *Doom* standards, the shotgun and the chaingun, as well as bombs and other goodies, are available throughout the game. The two other types of gameplay add to the diversity a bit, but aren't used very extensively. In the driving mode, you steer an armed car through the streets. Controls are a real bear, though; the car can only turn when moving forward or backward, and it's easy to get yourself lodged in dead ends. The hunter-killer hovercraft is also available for a couple of missions; it's more manageable than the car, but one problem with these sections is that there are no health power-ups (like medical kits), making for tough going at times.

Aside from the tricky controls, *TFS* is also burdened with a handsome but nearly useless 3D automap that makes it tough to figure out where you are and where you need to go. And there's no multi-player mode, a feature that has come to be expected in games of this type. Bethesda is reportedly planning an add-on with multi-player options, but it probably should have shipped with the first release. Add to this the sometimes-vague mission objectives, and *TFS* becomes a little less than what it could have been.

For a while, *Terminator: Future Stock* was a solid contender for an Editor's Choice rating, but — as often happens — it's the little things that chip away at a title and bring the score down. Though somewhat flawed, it's still a worthwhile addition to the crowded action game market.

— T. Liam McDonald

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

84%

HIGHS: Lots of action and a large environment to explore; killer sound effects.

LOWS: Occasionally clumsy controls when driving. Poor automapping. No multi-player mode.

BOTTOM LINE: A solid action game with sharp graphics and an exciting and familiar world that gamers will love.

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Product Information Number 156

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Grand Prix Manager

Category: Sports Simulation

Developer: Spectrum HoloByte

Publisher: Spectrum HoloByte, 2490 Mariner Square Loop, Alameda, CA 94501 (510) 522-1164

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM; 486/33; 4MB RAM; SVGA; Mouse; MS-DOS 5.0 or higher; Windows 3.1 or higher	486/66; 8MB RAM; Supported sound card

Jump into the pits as the head of a Formula One race team in *Grand Prix Manager*, where you call all the shots from start to finish.

If you're a fan of motor sports, you've probably noticed the superstar status that many big-name drivers enjoy. They swagger to the track on race day, strap into the cockpit, and drive to glory. If they win, they get to kiss the pretty women, spray the champagne, and cash the fat paycheck. When they lose, well, there's always next week. But when you look behind the scenes, you'll realize these drivers are only a small part of a larger whole, with a host of unheralded individuals working tirelessly in the garage and the office — repairing smashed cars, continuously testing in search of a competitive edge, courting sponsors, and constantly pushing the limits of the technology.

Sure, the drivers make a difference on the track, but it's the technological wizardry of the technicians, bankrolled by the marketing savvy of the financial guys, that makes champions. And that's what *Grand Prix Manager* is all about. This is your chance to put on the headset and call the shots as head of a multi-million dollar Formula One race team.

You'll have control over every aspect of running a Formula One team, from choosing engines, tires, fuel, brakes, suspension systems, and other components, to hiring and firing drivers and technicians. You'll even woo sponsors, and you decide whether to sell the hats, jackets, T-shirts, and toys that bear your team's logo. And once the groundwork is laid with sponsors, drivers, and your choice of car, you'll have to pull together all the pieces of the puzzle and try and win a championship.

The pursuit of speed is a key component in this constant battle, and if you don't keep on top of every aspect of your operation, you will fail. Not only will you have to make decisions on the design of your car, you'll also take charge during the race, deciding when to pit your cars and what type of tires to put on. You can also order your drivers to change their strategies on the track, to go for it or back off and save their cars. They might ignore your orders, though, claiming they couldn't hear that last radio transmission. But you're the boss, so you can fire them if they won't listen.

You'll watch each race as it unfolds, and while the graphics aren't the focus of this sim, the action on the track is surprisingly engaging. You see the action on all 16 tracks from an overhead perspective. Some players may think the graphics a bit crude, but they're better than I expected from a race management sim.

Through its user-friendly interface, *Grand Prix Manager* will even let you edit just about any aspect, from the names of the team, drivers, and technicians, to the ratings of drivers and parts. This sort of flexibility is a small but appreciated touch, and it's too often overlooked in simulations.

Hopefully, we won't have to wait too much longer before Spectrum HoloByte gives us the chance to get behind the wheel of one of these Formula One beauties in the upcoming *Grand Prix II*. Until then, *Grand Prix Manager* will provide a unique glimpse of what it's like to run the show. And after your experience in team management, maybe you'll be more careful with that multi-million-dollar car when you climb into the cockpit.

—Scott Wolf

From the main menu, you'll access the various phases of your team's operations. It can get a little tedious, but you can't afford to ignore any of these areas.

During the race, the decisions you make in the pits can turn a poor performance into a big payday for you struggling team.

You'll spend much of your time in the garage, tweaking various settings before you test them on the track.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

86%

HIGHS: An exhaustive and intriguing simulation of a big-league racing operation; user-friendly interface.

LOWS: Not enough action for some gamers.

BOTTOM LINE: If the subject of big-time racing interests you, you'll love *GPM*.

gearheads: War is fun.

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Chronomaster

Category: Graphic Adventure

Developer: Dreamforge Entertainment

Publisher: Capstone, 501 Brickell Key Drive, 6th floor, Miami, FL 33131 (800) 468-7226

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 4MB RAM; 5MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse	486/66MHz; 8MB RAM; 35MB hard-drive space; VLB SVGA card; Supported sound card

Tired of games that are all flash and no substance? Here's proof that a game doesn't have to push the technological envelope to be fun.

Based on the work of the late science-fiction author Roger Zelazny, *Chronomaster* from Capstone is something of a throwback. In this case, though, throwback isn't a derogatory term — at least not for gamers bored with the limited interaction that's the hallmark of many of today's multimedia-based adventures.

Chronomaster may lack the multimedia flash of, say, *The 11th Hour*, but it more than compensates with a well-paced story line, a huge assortment of characters, and a sprawling variety of puzzles. While it has its share of flaws, there's so much to do and see that most players will happily live with them.

Set sometime in the distant future, the world of *Chronomaster* is ripe with possibilities for graphic-adventure goodness. You play as Rene Korda, a retired scientist largely responsible for the development of pocket universes — tiny versions of the Big One that have their own distinct characteristics and physical laws.

When the game opens, you receive an alarming call from the regional representative of the Old Terran Government: Someone has placed two universes, the militaristic Urbs and desert-world of Aurans, into stasis, freezing them in time. Your mission is to reactivate the two universes and track down the person who put them into stasis; your only leads are the names of two pocket-universe architects associated with the areas in question.

Here's a tip when dealing with Arabou on Aurans: Don't trade away your Jinn bottle. If you've already done it, though, don't sweat it — you'll just have to find an item Arabou wants as much as the bottle.

To operate in a universe that's in stasis requires the use of bottled time — stuff that can pull objects and beings back into the regular flow of time — and this adds a twist to many of the puzzles facing you on Urbs and Aurans. If Korda walks too close to a monster that's in stasis, for instance, the field created by his bottled time can bring the critter to life in an instant. Spot a rock that's frozen in mid-air over a sinkhole that blocks your path, on the other hand, and you'll want to get close enough that it can resume its fall and plug up the pit.

After Korda successfully restores Urbs and Aurans, he receives a message that a suspect has been spotted on Fortuna, a Las Vegas-inspired universe where gambling's as natural as eating (sounds good to me!). Fortuna hasn't been placed in stasis yet, and after much to-ing and fro-ing, Korda finally confronts his adversary — only to learn that it's someone he once counted as a friend (I'd say more, but I don't want to spoil it for gamers who will have worked hours to get to this important scene). Depending on the decision you make, the game can end here or go on for quite a bit longer.

Each pocket universe you encounter is basically a game unto itself — you can't carry an object from one universe to another — and *Chronomaster* creator Jane Linskold and the folks on the Dreamforge development team have made full use of the possibilities offered by this design. In addition to all the traditional graphic-adventure commands such

It takes Korda a long time to cross this hallway — and all you can do while he walks is sit and watch.

as Look, Talk, Walk, Use, Push/Pull, Open/Close, and Take, Korda also has a "Universal Tool" at his disposal. The UT can always be used as a hammer or screwdriver, but it has a third capability that changes from universe to universe. Korda also has a Personal Digital Assistant that can interface with some of the objects he finds, and on some planets he must learn and cast spells. With so many ways to approach each obstacle, it's no wonder that some of the puzzles can get pretty hairy.

Ron Perlman, best known for his role as the Beast on TV's "Beauty & the Beast," handles the voiceovers for Rene Korda. At first, his laid-back delivery wore on my nerves, but after I'd gotten into the meat of the game and was hot on the trail of my quarry, it didn't bother me. More satisfying is Brent Spiner's Milo, probably because his character is more emotional than Korda. But the real surprise here is Lolita Davidovich as Jester — her voices bubbles with enthusiasm as she compliments, scolds, warns, and cajoles her creator, Korda. Once you get past the name actors, however, the quality drops a notch or two; it never descends into awfulness, but there's more than one character who sounds like a newcomer to the acting profession.

After you've felt that deep-down-good feeling that comes from piecing together a tangled web of clues to solve a problem, though, you won't care one bit that some of the voice actors are a little amateurish or stilted. What *will* bother you, though, are a few annoying features of the *Chronomaster* design — problems that aren't big enough to cripple the game, but which are noticeable enough to keep it out of the Editors' Choice category.

The main flaw involves, appropriately enough, time — time spent walking, known to some long-suffering adventure gamers as TSW. While the animation of Korda moving through the game world is fluid and realistic, it's not worth watching for 10, 15, or even 20 seconds at a stretch. As our hero plods from one side of the casino to the other or wends his way down a spiral staircase to see the Witch on Cabal, you'll feel like screaming at him to pick up the damn pace. The solution to this problem is simple: Just allow the user to double-click on an exit arrow to go immediately to the next scene, just as in LucasArts' *The Dig* and *Full Throttle*.

The TSW problem isn't the only instance where gameplay is needlessly slowed. The animation that runs as you switch from the main cockpit view to either the Navigation Console or the Database Console can take a good eight to ten seconds, even on a Pentium 133 with a fast video card; I'd gladly trade that animation to cut the load time in half. When you ride any of the elevators found in the game, you can only move up or down one floor at a time, exiting the elevator each time, whether that was where you wanted to go or not.

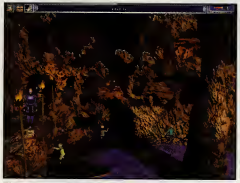
Another problem is the sometimes-tricky movement of your character — sometimes you have to click-click-click your way around an obstacle to reach an exit, when a single click on the exit arrow *should* send Korda on the shortest path to the next screen. And while there's a QuickSave function lets you save a game with a minimum of fuss, the only place where you can load a QuickSave game is at the main menu — and to get there during a game, you must either die or exit to DOS and start the game again.

One thing I can't complain about is the quality of the graphics. This is top-notch stuff, as good or better than in any graphic adventure with this level of interaction, and the use of different perspectives helps make each location distinct — a real plus when you're doing this much detective work.

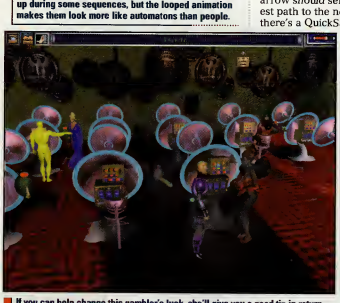
A few of the solutions to the puzzles are downright vague (I'm still trying to figure out why Korda used the Probability Driver that increased his chances at winning at slots to decipher a scrambled videotape), but at least the clues — though their meanings may be obscure initially — are easy enough to spot. The puzzles themselves span a broad range of difficulty: There are plenty of problems that novices can solve right off the bat, but enough tough ones to challenge even longtime adventurers.

At a time when developers scramble to create the simplest interfaces possible based on the assumption that new gamers are "frightened" by the prospect of learning commands and manipulating objects, *Chronomaster* is unashamedly traditional. Luckily for adventure fans, though, sometimes the old ways are the best ways.

— *Steve Poole*



3D-modeled characters (this one is Rene Korda) pop up during some sequences, but the looped animation makes them look more like automatons than people.



If you can help change this gambler's luck, she'll give you a good tip in return. Sounds like a job for the Probability Driver function on the Universal Tool....

That circle around Korda is his bottled time — and if he moves too close to the monster in the middle of the screen, he'll learn just how fast an animal can come out of stasis.

3D-modeled characters (this one is Rene Korda) pop up during some sequences, but the looped animation makes them look more like automatons than people.

PC GAMER **FINAL VERDICT**

84%

HIGHS: Excellent graphics; variety of puzzles, ranging from no-brainers to hair-pullers; good plot and lots of interaction keeps things interesting.

LOWS: Too much time is spent traveling; newcomers may find the options overwhelming.

BOTTOM LINE: It doesn't break any new ground, but it delivers a mighty big dose of puzzle-solving fun, even for experienced gamers.

THE 11TH HOUR
{*the five stages.*}

1
Shock.
You finally figure out The 7th Guest™, only to hear that its sequel, The 11th Hour is going to be released.

2
Disbelief.
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3
Resentment.
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4
Acceptance.
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5
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MATURE M

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Allied General

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Wargame

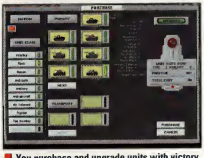
Developer: Halestrom/SSI

Publisher: SSI, 675 Almanor Ave; Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086-2901 (408) 737-6800

This long-awaited sequel to last year's Wargame of the Year, *Panzer General*, is a worthy successor.

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; 4MB hard-drive space; Mouse; Windows 3.1	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 12MB RAM; 30MB hard-drive space; Supported sound card

Someone once said that sequels are always inferior to the original. Obviously, they'd never seen *The Godfather II* or read *Huckleberry Finn*. The truth is, while most sequels are just a rehash of the original, they don't have to be. *Warcraft II* was better than *Warcraft*, *SimCity 2000* was better than *SimCity*, and countless other games improve as they go along.



You purchase and upgrade units with victory points earned by holding cities.

Sometimes they make only minor changes in technology or graphics (such as *Doom II*), and sometimes major overhauls screw up great ideas (*Ultima VIII*). And sometimes, as with *Allied General*, they just kinda coast.

The original in this case is SSI's *Panzer General*, which bears the distinction as the most successful computer wargame ever. We liked it so much we named it Wargame of the Year in 1995. It wasn't exactly a wargamer's wargame — it was a simple, easily understood game along the lines of *Axis and Allies*: You didn't have to be a junior Clausewitz to understand the simple units and the large scale. It wasn't very accurate or realistic, and hard-core grognards (the unredeemable core of wargamers) sniffed at it as mere entertainment. That was, as our own Bill Trotter said, their loss. It was an immensely fun game.

As soon as *PG* was hailed as a success, SSI announced *Allied General* for the next year. They promised to make a game where players could fight from the other side in World War Two, as the British, Americans, and Russians. They also promised a Windows and Windows 95 game. They've delivered both these things quite well, and the fact that they didn't deliver more is only a slight disappointment.

Is *Allied General* better or worse than *PG*? That all depends on your perspective. It offers exactly the same kind of gameplay as before, with large-scale battles, sharp graphics, and a simple engine. There are three campaigns — North Africa, Russia, and Western Europe — as well as 39 stand-alone battles. As with *PG*, you start with units and can upgrade them or buy new ones using prestige points based on success in combat and cities held. In campaigns, you carry a core group of units from one conflict to the next, building strong veteran units to give you an edge.

As to whether you'll like it or not, well, you'd better enjoy using Windows or (preferably) Windows 95, since *Allied General* won't run in DOS. A handful of new features have been included to take

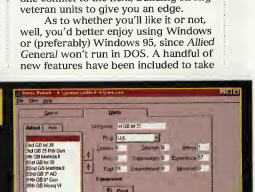
***Allied General* features three World War Two Allied campaigns: Europe, Russia, and North Africa.**

Create Your Dream Army

Having trouble routing the Nazis in those tough European campaigns? If so, you've no doubt encountered the sneaky AI of *Allied General*, which takes a few liberties when assigning unit values to the computer-controlled adversaries. And since *AG* doesn't come with a unit editor, gamers who haven't had much experience with wargames are left without a method for leveling the playing field against this unfair advantage.

But help is available with Skookum Software's *Brass Polish 2*, by Peter Donnelly and Stuart Gillespie, which is designed to edit units for both *Allied General* and *Panzer General*. Using a simple Windows interface, you can edit save-game files for such variables as prestige, weather, dates, strength, fuel, ammo, experience, and so on. With the registered version of *Brass Polish 2* you can also give units new equipment and print full equipment tables. It also lets you mix different units together, so a dream-army of American, British, German, and Russian troops can be cobbled together for a scenario.

You can find the shareware version of *Brass Polish 2* on the *PC Gamer* CD-ROM this month. Registration is $12 and goes to Skookum Software, 1301 Ryan Street; Victoria BC; Canada V8T 4Y8.



***Brass Polish 2* lets you edit saved games for both *Allied General* and *Panzer General*.**

A handful of features has been added to take advantage of Win95, including the ability to have several windows open. The map window gives you a handy overview of the action.

advantage of the new operating environment and add quite a bit to the game. For example, there are now several windows you can have open at once, including information and map windows. Gone, however, is the simple, automatic scrolling: now you have to use scroll bars or the arrows in a recon window to move around the map. The graphics still look pretty sharp, and there's still some video throughout, but the music is gone for the most part, and the sound effects don't seem as vivid. The combat visuals, which most gamers ended up turning off, look about the same as those in *PG*.

New features include greatly improved E-mail play, which allows for notes, better encryption, and playback of an opponent's moves. There is also now a dossier feature which tracks your career throughout all the battles, toting up wins and losses. A new history records unit actions for a turn, and long file names are supported. The AI doesn't seem as sharp as before, and some AI cheating is blatantly obvious. But it still provides a good challenge and is pretty reactive.

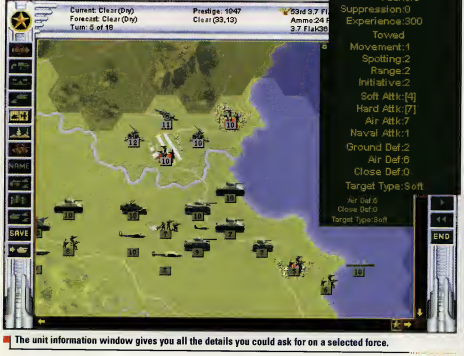
So, feature-wise, *Allied General* is *Panzer General*'s equivalent, with a minor loss (autoscrolling) and some major gains (multiple windows, resolutions up to 1024x768, improved E-mail, and so on). Some desirable features that would put *Allied General* at the top of the heap are missing, such as a terrain editor, unit editor, and modem play, but these features are no doubt being saved for *Panzer General II*.

There's been a lot of online bickering about *Allied General*'s status as a Windows-only game, with the two camps basically divided into "I hate Windows and don't see why I should miss out" and "Keep up with the times or die." But neither of these camps really takes the time to address the fundamental issue: is it a good wargame?

The answer is, yes. There are plenty of battles, and each has some unique challenges. A wide spectrum of WWII-era warfare and units are covered, including Finnish, Russian, American, British, German, Italian, French (Free and Vichy), Bulgarian, and others. Armor, infantry, artillery, aircraft, and ships are all included, fighting in a wide array of battles. Large scale scenarios like Overlord, To the Rhine, Crusader, and others capture the sweep of warfare over a vast landscape, while tight battles like Kasserine Pass and Sidi Barrani concentrate on smaller, quicker actions. There's a good variety of landscapes, from the deserts of Africa to the snowy mountains of Finland, each with their own qualities and challenges. Leningrad, Stalingrad, Torch, Tunis, Anzio, Sicily, Ploesti, Dniepr are all here, along with hypotheticals in Tripoli and Norway.

The campaigns, however, are the strongest feature of *Allied General*. They give a sense of the epic sweep of armies and the challenges faced by the Allies as they fought the Axis. As you fight through the connected battles, you build your core units into an elite fighting force, and learn how to deploy the best and the worst of your army. It's at this level that *Allied General* succeeds best. If it's not the huge step forward many people expected, it is still an effective and satisfying sequel to a hugely popular and challenging game.

—T. Liam McDonald



The unit information window gives you all the details you could ask for on a selected force.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

89%

HIGHS: Many of the same qualities that made *Panzer General* a winner, plus multiple-window interface.

LOWS: Not enough new here, and some desirable features are missing.

BOTTOM LINE: A good beer-n-pretzels wargame for Windows, but it could have been a bit better.

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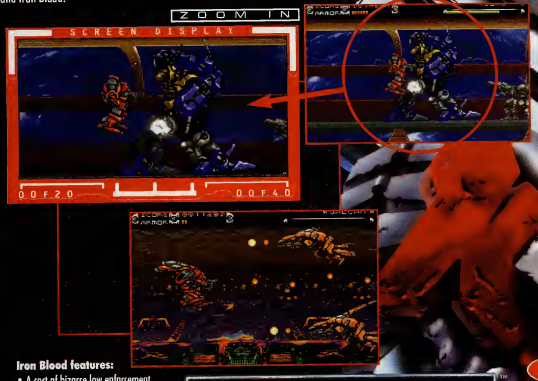

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Product Information Number 134

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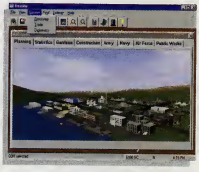

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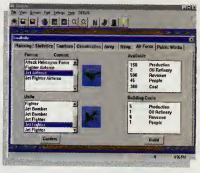

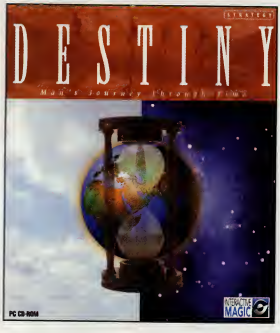

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Product Information Number 124

Psychic Detective

Category: Interactive Mystery Movie

Developer: Colossal Pictures & EA

Publisher: Electronic Arts, 1450 Fashion Island Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94402 (415) 571-7171

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX/50; 8MB RAM; 21MB hard-drive space; SVGA; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 23MB hard-drive space; SVGA card with 2MB

EA tries to pull an interactive rabbit out of their hat, and out springs an intriguing piece of multimedia — but not a lot of magic.

Forget everything you've ever read about Interactive Movies. That's right, even ... no, hey, wait! Come back! Don't tell me you're not interested. You mean to say that if you could jump into *Pulp Fiction*, make John Travolta take the machine gun into the bathroom with him and have Bruce Willis leave before he comes out, you wouldn't? Of course you would. That way, Vincent Vega lives, Butch lives — and you still get to enjoy a great story.

Now, let's suppose that somebody (oh, say, Colossal Pictures and Electronic Arts, for instance) made an interesting movie, shot with enough ancillary material to cover such *Pulp Fiction* choices, then magically shoehorned it onto 3 CD-ROMs in a free-flowing format like nothing you've ever seen before. Think you'd wanna play it? Maybe?

Exactly one year ago, I described my ideal dream game, in part by saying, "the game would play itself like a movie until I decide to jump in, and would continue like a movie when I jump out." And that's exactly what *Psychic Detective* does.

Hey, come back! Of course, there's more! You play Eric Fox, The Psychic Flash who, like Swann in Clive Barker's *Lord of Illusions*, is squandering his psychic abilities in cheesy second-rate hotel shows. When famed paranormal researcher Vladimir Pozok suddenly commits suicide, his lovely daughter, Laina, hires you to find out why. She also shows you how to transmit — that is, hop into the heads of other characters, see and hear what they see and hear, and have a not-so-subtle influence on their behavior.

This ability is what makes *Psychic Detective* so special. You can seamlessly switch perspectives in conversations to any participant's point of view, then hop into the head of a passing character and go for a ride while your own body goes on about its business. You don't physically steer Fox, you make decisions — who to jump into; what objects to "read" with your psychic abilities; how to deal with confrontations — by selecting icons which appear and disappear in the borders around the crystal-clear quarter-screen video window. You need only the right and left cursor keys to toggle through the choices, and the spacebar to select them.

Since the movie is in constant motion (no looping like *Johnny Mnemonic*), these icons flash by, window-of-opportunity-style, and the story continues whether you use them or not. The first choices that appear are not necessarily the best for the task at hand, and each decision affects how much you learn, who lives or dies, and how well you are prepared for the final psychic battle — a game of Black Diamond against the engagingly evil Max Mirage.

You can play through *Psychic Detective* in about an hour, and no matter what you do you'll always arrive at the Black Diamond game toward the end. It's a little like *Voyeur* in that respect; there's no way to see all of the scenes the first time around, and the only way to win Black Diamond is to see the right ones. The more you play, the more you learn.

There are so many different ways to arrive at the ending, not to mention fourteen separate epilogues (most of which find you burned out and semi-brain-dead) that the replay value is quite literally off the chart. But piecing the parts together will mean a considerable amount of repetition before you finally win.

There's no denying that you spend most of your time watching and not enough playing. I believe it was *PCG* editor-turned-publisher Matt Firme who said, "You don't play a computer game so that you can sit back and watch a movie." Fair enough. The line is drawn. In that respect, *Psychic Detective* certainly isn't much of a game, but it's a great interactive movie.

— *Scott Wolf*

***Psychic Detective's* story moves inexorably toward a climectic game called Black Diamond — whether you're ready or not.**

As you watch sherp-looking video footage in the center window, your options come and go in the border.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

77%

HIGHS: This is an effective interactive movie, with good acting and an intriguing plot.

LOWS: With its repetitive nature and low interactivity quotient, it's not much of a game.

BOTTOM LINE: As PC games go, *Psychic Detective* is one heck of a movie.

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Product Information Number 132

Thexder

Win95

Category: Arcade

Developer: Sierra

Publisher: Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707

Required	We Recommend
Win95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/66; 8MB RAM; SVGA; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; Supported sound card; Gamepad

Over the past year, we've seen a lot of fast-paced arcade-style titles flood onto the market, like *Earthworm Jim*, *Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure*, and even *WWF Wrestling*. While these games weren't originally designed for the PC, they're good, action-oriented fun, and they give gamers a variety of sources for their arcade fix. Still, you have to wonder what would be possible if the designers of those games tapped the power of the PC to create original titles, rather than adaptations of cartridge-based games. In the case of *Thexder*, Sierra has done exactly that, designing a side-scrolling platform shooter from the ground up to work on the PC, and more specifically under Windows 95.

Multi-threading, sizable windows, and multi-player options are just a few of the things that were incorporated into the design to make *Thexder* something different. But here's the funny thing: None of it seems to give *Thexder* a leg up on the competition. In fact, *Thexder* is just plain dull.

Part of the problem is the fact that the game has some pretty demanding system requirements (a 486/66 is the minimum) — and yet, once you load the game it's hard to determine where all that power is going. From the opening level through the rest of the game, *Thexder* looks and plays as if it were a couple of years old. Even though there are a host of graphics options that allow you to choose resolutions up to 1024x768, the simple textures and character animations just don't begin to compare to the outlandish, polished cartoon styles of other recent PC arcade games.

But, hardware demands aside, it's the lackluster gameplay that is the real nail in the coffin here. With *Thexder*'s clumsy character control from a gamepad or keyboard and tons of clunky explosion animations, you'll need to be pretty dedicated to blast your way through more than a few levels. If you're determined enough, you might actually survive long enough to gain better weapons, inventory items, and a larger variety of enemies, and at this point *Thexder* can become mildly entertaining. But in the end, *Thexder* isn't worth the trouble; if you're a real arcade fan, you'd probably be better off investing your hard-earned cash in *Earthworm Jim*.

—Todd Vaughn

Blam! And then he was mucilage! ***Thexder*** **takes a potshot at a threatening robot drone before moving on to explore the level.**

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

55%

HIGHS: Good weapons variety; network and multi-player options.

LOWS: Slow graphics, lackluster gameplay, confusing multiple windows.

BOTTOM LINE: If you're a side-scrolling action fan, stick to *Earthworm Jim* or *Pitfall*.

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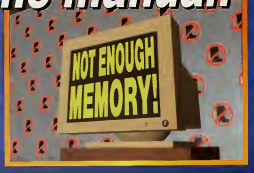

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Product Information Number 169

Torin's Passage

Category: Adventure

Developer: Sierra

Publisher: Sierra, 3380 146th Place S.E., Suite 300, Bellevue, WA 98007 (800) 757-7707

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM; 486/33; 8MB RAM; SVGA; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM; Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

From the twisted mind of *Leisure Suit Larry* creator Al Lowe comes a surprisingly family-oriented graphic adventure.

Where would a fairy tale be without a big, colorful, dopey monster working for an evil sorceress?

As the creator of the very successful Leisure Suit Larry series of graphic adventures, Al Lowe has been associated with some of the funniest and most outlandish adult-oriented titles ever to grace the PC. Locker-room humor and double-entendres were his trademark. So it comes as a bit of a surprise to find out that with *Torin's Passage*, Lowe has stepped away from his seedy lounge-lizard creation to design a game that is intended for *children* as well as adults.

And *Torin's Passage* pulls it off fairly well. The game centers on a young man's search for his kidnapped parents. To find them, he must travel through the five nested layers of his world, Strata. Along the way, he'll meet two-headed vultures, athletic snails, and even the woman of his dreams. Each layer of the world comprises a separate chapter, and at the beginning of each chapter the story reveals a little more about Torin's background.

Torin's Passage uses the same sort of animation techniques used in *King's Quest VII*, which should appeal to young children almost as much as the story line.

Some of the tougher puzzles, like this one, could bore and frustrate young players.

A blend of styles inspired by Disney and Warner Bros., the animation serves up plenty of sight-gags and visual treats, mostly from Boogle, Torin's strange, poly-morphing pet. However, some of the puzzles will definitely require some adult concentration to complete. The vast majority of them are rather simplistic, but a few are quite challenging, even for seasoned gamers. And that's where the connection between adult and child will either be lost or strengthened. Although older children may take part in the puzzle solving, most younger kids will be quickly bored by watching mom or dad click through a puzzle on the screen.

Fortunately, however, the puzzles aren't lengthy. And for those who get stuck easily or just want to keep the game moving, a hint button is available, with options that let players adjust the difficulty by selecting a time limit — also a great idea for those playing with impatient kids.

However, experienced gamers will find *Torin's Passage* a bit dull. If you don't have a child to share the game with and you're looking for a fun graphic adventure, this probably wouldn't be the best choice. With a few notable exceptions, the puzzles are rather easy — some worlds only require a few clicks to complete. For most intermediate players, the game will only take a few sittings to finish. The graphics are pretty, and the animation is fantastically done, but, ultimately, you'd get a more entertaining experience watching a Disney film.

—Michael Wolf

As Torin searches for his perents, he'll find the women of his dreems (guess Lowe *had* to put e beautiful women in here somewhere).

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

79%

HIGHS: Wonderful graphics; simple control; hint button for tough puzzles.

LOWS: Only a few tough puzzles. Seasoned players will finish it quickly.

BOTTOM LINE: It's great if you're looking for a game to share with your kid, but experienced gamers should find something more challenging.

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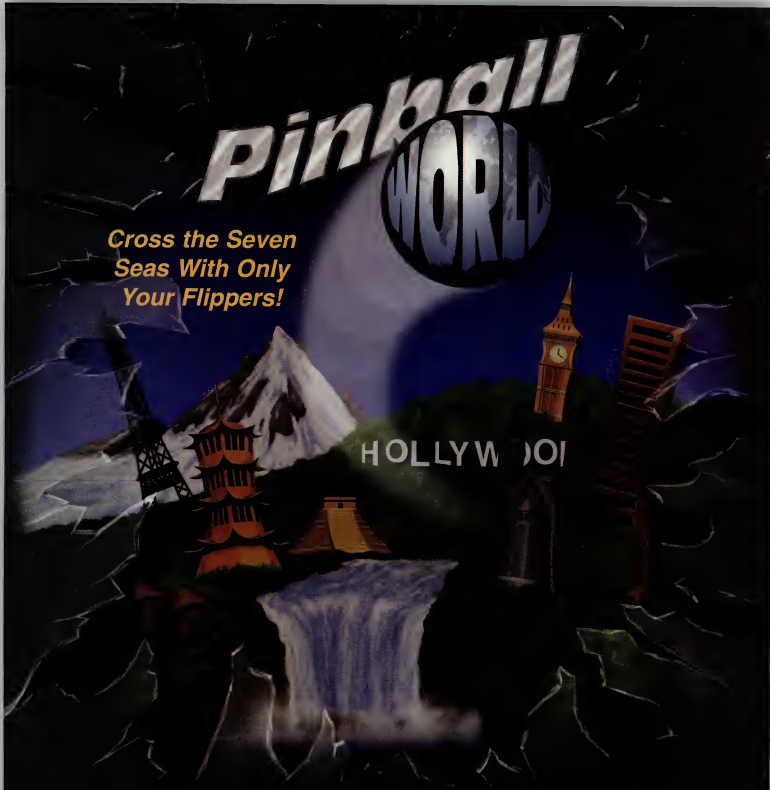

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Touché

Category: Adventure

Developer: Clipper Software

Publisher: U.S. Gold, 303 Sacramento Street, San Francisco, CA 94111 (415) 693-2097

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 8MB RAM; SVGA; Mouse	Supported sound card

Despite a few interface problems, *Touché* is a charming, low-key adventure game that fans of the genre will appreciate.

Loosely based on characters from Alexandre Dumas' classic novel, *The Three Musketeers*, *Touché: The Adventures of the Fifth Musketeer* from U.S. Gold is one of those rare games that doesn't exactly overwhelm you when you first fire it up, but still manages to wheedle its way under your skin with a sense of charm, style and fun. Created with a lighthearted and humorous approach to the Musketeer mystique, *Touché* details the exploits of the fifth Musketeer, Ensign Geoffroi le Brun, as he attempts to prove his worth to the famous French regiment. Along the way, Geoffroi will investigate the murder of a nobleman, court lovely ladies, hire a trusty manservant, and try to survive hair-raising scrape after hair-raising scrape.

It's a novel idea for an adventure, and throughout the game you'll travel through the French countryside, learn of a dire plot that involves the Church, and maybe even have a laugh or two.

Like *The Dig* or *Torin's Passage*, the gameplay of *Touché* is standard adventure-game fare. You move your character around using a point-and-click interface, access your inventory, and select dialog from a list of options. In fact, there's nothing terribly fancy about *Touché*; no full-motion video, just cartoonish SVGA graphics and characters that set a pleasant, laid-back tone that never takes itself too seriously.

It doesn't look or perform much differently from a host of other games, but when you consider the fact that *Touché*'s simple and effective character interactions stay interesting, the puzzles challenging, and the story line appealing, it all adds up to a pretty rewarding adventure game.

But that not to say it's perfect by any means, either. You'll run into a few problems when moving characters or picking up items, because the interface can be a little fussy at times; objects are hard to locate, characters stand in the way of important characters or items, and sometimes you just can't get to the next screen without hunting for that one little pixel that contains the hot spot you need to click. If you enjoy the story, you probably won't notice these small problems very often — but if you want to get from place to place quickly, the interface can prove frustrating.

Another problem arises when you're talking to the various characters you'll encounter. Not only do they answer the standard questions you'll be asking them, but you'll find that they can drone on endlessly without the slightest provocation. One example of this is when Geoffroi and his manservant, Henri, prepare to leave a scene to go somewhere else. Instead of merely walking off-screen, you'll usually have to sit through three or four lines of dialog before they'll even begin to move.

But in the grand scheme of things, these problems are fairly minor, and most gamers will hardly notice such stumbles as they progress through the game. *Touché* slowly and steadily delivers the puzzles and interaction to keep you plodding along happily until you reach the end.

—*Todd Vaughn*

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PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

77%

HIGHS: Nice graphics, good voice-acting, and a humorous story line.

LOWS: Long-winded dialog, a few obscure puzzles, and a finicky interface.

BOTTOM LINE: *Touché* is a satisfying adventure game that doesn't take itself too seriously.

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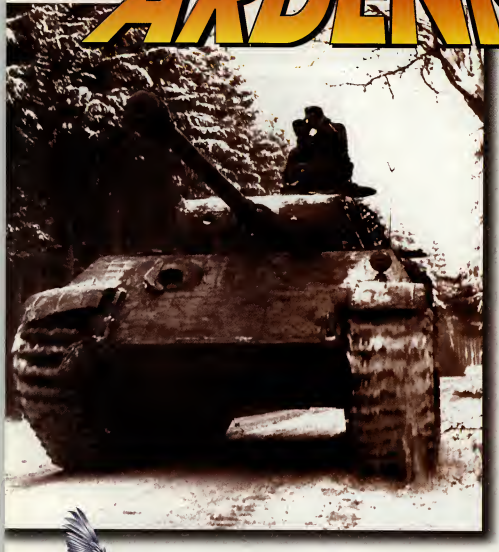

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Product Information Number 167

Screamer

Category: Arcade Racing

Developer: Graffiti

Publisher: Virgin, 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (714) 833-8710

Required	We Recommend
CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; DOS 5.0 or greater; SVGA	Double-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card; Driving wheel

For fast, tire-melting action and wicked, multi-player thrills, *Screamer* delivers the best of both worlds.

Compared to the recent crop of driving games, like the realism-heavy *IndyCar II* or the futuristic shoot-'em-up, *Zone Raiders*, Virgin's new entry into the racing market — Screamer — might seem a little tame. There's not much in the way of fancy graphics (although the game's high-res, SVGA mode is certainly attractive), it doesn't have a complex, futuristic plot, and it won't prepare you for racing in the big leagues. But if you take a moment to load up this little beauty, you'll find that Screamer delivers enough white-knuckle thrills to put a smile on the faces of all but the most jaded leadfoots.

Like the classic coin-op arcade game, *Pole Position*, or Electronic Arts' recent *The Need for Speed*, there's nothing subtle or deep about *Screamer*'s gameplay. You simply choose one of the six high-powered cars at your disposal, pick either an automatic or a manual transmission, then it's off to one of six tracks where you'll try to take the checkered flag as you bump and grind your way past your competitors in either single-player or multi-player competition.

It's simple, effective, and fun. But if you've ever dropped a quarter into *Pole Position*'s slot, you'll know it's not as easy as it sounds. Once you hit the track in your chosen car, your choice of a manual or automatic transmission creates an interesting dilemma. With two less joystick buttons or keyboard commands to worry about, the automatic-shift cars are easier to control, so this is the best choice for a beginner. However, once you reach the pro league, a manual transmission is a must; besides giving you a few more kphs in speed, the manual transmission cars handle better.

Beyond deciding whether to shift or not to shift, there's little in the way of setup to get in the way of your racing fix. There are collisions all over the place, and when you flip your car, you'll simply bounce in place for a few seconds, then it's right back to the race, with no penalty — except for lost time, of course. On the other hand, if you take a sick pleasure in knocking your opponents off the track, you may not lose the race — but you won't see much in the way of spectacular crashes or exploding cars, either.

One drawback to the game's simple nature becomes apparent once you've rounded the track enough times to notice that the computer-controlled cars operate in a suspiciously familiar way. Race after race, the same cars are spread out in a predictable pattern — a few cars in the lead, a big clump in the middle, and one or two laggards in the back, all running below your top speed. The computerized opponents don't get in each other's way, either; they act more like a moving obstacle

Virgin Interactive's *Screamer* runs decently in high-res SVGA if you have a Pentium PC with a lot of horsepower — but most gamers will prefer the faster VGA mode.

DRIVING SCHOOL

You may choose from several screen modes in *Screamer*, a full-screen view, a view from behind your car, or a dashboard view (shown here).

SCREAMER'S STEEL

THE SHADOW

This Lamborghini look-alike is one of the fastest cars, and it's the computer's favorite ride. Expect this one to race you to the finish.

THE HAMMER

The Hammer is the best all-around car, a near perfect blend of speed, acceleration, and handling. You can easily keep the lead in this one.

THE TIGER

Yet another Italian sports car — a Ferrari — and another beauty. Is it surprising that all the programmers have Italian names?

THE RISING SUN

Incredible acceleration will put the Mitsubishi in the lead, but it takes a skilled driver to keep it there, considering it has the lowest top speed and it handles pretty badly.

THE PANTHER

The ratings on the screen don't match its performance on the track — this Porsche is a great car; it's only handicap is keeping up with the others on the long straight-aways.

THE YANKEE

Poor performance makes this Corvette clone a challenge worthy of veteran drivers. Don't let the cool flames fool you; the automatic-transmission version is nearly worthless.

One of the most wicked turns occurs in Lindburg, a gorgeous track reminiscent of a small European city. Making this turn by bouncing off the bad guy takes timing.

than real drivers.

But no matter; it's still fun. You have to get in there and mix it up, edging ahead of a rival, then timing your sideswipe just right so he goes tumbling end over end. This jockeying for position is the best part of *Screamer* and puts it out in front of *Need For Speed* for pure driving excitement.

Screamer's sound effects are pretty good, too — clear enough to let you play it by ear when shifting gears rather than keeping one eye on the tachometer; and the menus are straightforward, if a little unsophisticated. One annoying feature during the championship mode is that if you fail to place on one course, you'll have to navigate through seven screens just to get back into the same race. And if you want to switch between joystick and keyboard control, you have to go all the way out of the game and run the setup program.

On the visual side, *Screamer* uses attractive VGA graphics to render the cars and tracks throughout the game, and the cars look good and move fast — on a Pentium with plenty of RAM, that is. There are a few detail options you can turn off to make the game run more smoothly on a fast 486, but it'll probably still be too sluggish for most PC racers' tastes. There's an SVGA mode, too, but it's more for looks than for racing, since even on a Pentium 100 the frame rate is a little choppy. On the plus side, there are three views at your disposal — a behind-the-car view; a full-screen, in-car view; and a full-screen in-car view with the cockpit — to give you just the right angle on the action as you're taking those tight turns.

The network installation option lets you get a big network game going with just one copy of the CD-ROM, allowing you to hook up with as many as seven players. This is a great convenience for gamers and a clever marketing move by Virgin; having real-life players behind the wheel adds a lot of replay value to *Screamer*. Unfortunately, the game doesn't include modem support for head-to-head action.

This game had the ingredients of a great coin-op game — terrific graphics and fast, addictive action, but not a lot of depth or durability. After logging many hours behind the wheel, though, I have to say there's nothing wrong with that recipe at all.

—Jason Bates

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

83%

HIGHS: Fast-paced action that never gets bogged down; rocketing these cars around the gorgeous VGA tracks is a blast.

LOWS: There's little realism, few custom options, and no modem play; some veteran PC drivers may find it too easy.

BOTTOM LINE: If you just want to drive fast and not worry about the details, this is for you.

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Product Information Number 122

Shannara

Category: Adventure

Developer: Legend Entertainment Co.

Publisher: Legend Entertainment Co., P.O. Box 10810, 14200 Park Meadow Dr., Chantilly, VA, 22021 (703) 222-8500

Required	We Recommend
CD-ROM drive; 486/33; 4MB RAM; Mouse; SVGA	Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 8MB RAM; Supported sound card

The fantasy world created by best-selling author Terry Brooks finally comes to the PC — but this game is far from a page-turner.

If you're the least bit familiar with Terry Brooks' best-selling series of Shannara novels, then you've probably wondered when someone would get around to creating a computer game based on the Shannara universe. For most fans, transforming the richly detailed characters and kingdoms of Shannara into a PC game would seem a natural extension of the books, and could potentially provide countless hours of gameplay.

Enter the folks at Legend, who over the years have successfully adapted the works of authors such as Frederik Pohl (*Gateway*) and Piers Anthony (*Companions of Xanth*) into fun and rewarding PC games. But instead of the deep RPG or thoughtful adventure that most fans would expect from them, Legend's version of *Shannara* is a surprisingly lightweight game that probably won't hold much appeal for the dedicated audience it targets.

The setup for *Shannara* isn't the problem (even though Brooks had little to do with the script for the game); it starts well enough, with the ancient warlock king, Brona, returning to the land of the living, decades after his death, in order to seek vengeance against those who killed him. Naturally, his first act is to unleash armies of horrible monsters upon the land, spreading fear and chaos across once-peaceful kingdoms. As the young hero, Jak Ohmsford, you soon learn from a Druid named Alanon that only you have the power to end Brona's evil reign — and to do that, you'll have to retrieve the Sword of Shannara, which has been locked away since Brona's defeat years earlier. You set out on a quest which will take you through troubled kingdoms as you attempt to locate the sword and destroy Brona.

Like previous Legend games, the narrative window in *Shannara* gives you details about the objects and people you encounter.

Throughout the game, Legend's penchant for creating attractive, easy-to-use and accessible games certainly shows in *Shannara*. The graphics are crisp and sharp, the sound effects are minimal but very effective, and the narrative text (or speech) flows through each scene without missing a beat. Movement and action commands are clearly marked and easily accessible, and the inventory system is a breeze.

But as attractive as the presentation is, there's simply not enough meat in this game to hold your interest for long. Unlike in previous Legend titles, the narrative elements that create and maintain the story are sparse and unengaging throughout much of the game, revealing little information about your quest; for the most part, they're limited to character interactions directly related to whatever the current puzzle is. As for the puzzles themselves, you'll find they are simply too easy to present much of a challenge even to novice gamers, since a few clicks through items in your inventory is usually all it takes to solve most of the problems you encounter.

In the end, *Shannara* seems to suffer from an over-cautious design — maybe the result of an attempt to appeal to a broader audience by leaving out the deeper content that might've made it a standout adventure. As an adventure game, *Shannara* fails to present much of a challenge to seasoned gamers; and as an addition to the Shannara canon, the shallow story line will probably disappoint even die-hard Terry Brooks fans.

—Todd Vaughn

The interface and graphics in *Shannara* are first-rate, but the puzzles throughout the game will prove too easy for most adventure fans.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

72%

HIGHS: Sharp, hi-res graphics; a few challenging puzzles; solid interface and inventory system.

LOWS: Frustrating combat interface, far too many easy puzzles.

BOTTOM LINE: Fans of the books won't like the simplified story, and gamers will find it too easy.

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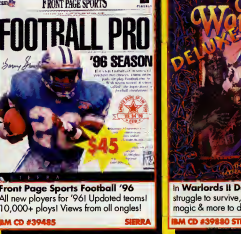

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Hooves Of Thunder

Category: Sports Simulation

Developer: MicroLeague

Publisher: MicroLeague, 750 Dawson Dr., Newark, DE, 19713 (717) 872-6576

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33; SVGA graphics; 8MB RAM; Mouse; MS-DOS 5.0 or higher; Windows 3.1 or higher	486/66; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

If raising a racehorse or playing the ponies is your idea of fun, *Hooves of Thunder* delivers all the explosive action you could ever want.

If you're an armchair horse breeder — no wisecracks, please — or a closet gambling junkie, MicroLeague's new horse-racing simulation, *Hooves of Thunder*, is your ticket to the track. Over the years, there have been a couple of decent horse-racing sims, most notably *Quarterpole*, but *Hooves of Thunder* gallops past those efforts with lovely graphics and a detailed treatment of the sport of kings.

Horse racing is no longer just the sport of kings, of course. Very wealthy commoners can participate, too, and that's what *Hooves of Thunder* lets you do: build a stable of thoroughbreds to amass your fortune. You'll more likely lose your shirt, but hey — it's just a game.

Make no mistake, it takes lots of hard work to pick winners with any consistency. Keep your bets small until you get a chance to study how horses perform at different lengths and track conditions. When you get to know the horseflesh, step up the wagers and look for horses to buy. It's an involved and sometimes tedious process, but fortunately the game rewards you with consistent, logical outcomes, so your perseverance will pay off.

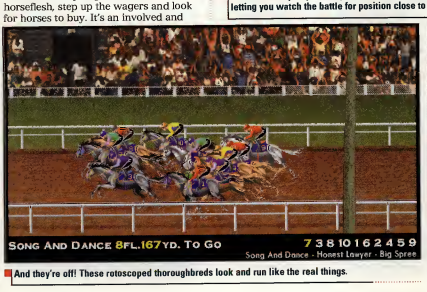
The game advances on a calendar, with 125 races a year to challenge your luck playing the ponies and your skill at building a winning stable. There are five racetracks on the circuit, both turf and grass. As a stable owner, you buy and sell horses, choose trainers and jockeys, and decide when to run your horses. For a little side action, you can bet the whole bank on any race.

All the data you need is at your fingertips, including jockey, trainer, and horse histories. If you're unsure which races to enter with which horses, you can let your trainer enter races while you study the other horses and watch your bank account dwindle. And if you don't care to watch every single race — and you probably won't — you can fast-forward to a specific date, or to an auction, claiming race, or a race in which you have a horse running.

The flexibility of *Hooves of Thunder* doesn't force you to play the game in a certain way, and provides a nice balance of gameplay for nearly ever interest at the track. You can bypass the stables and concentrate on betting, or you can keep your money in your pocket and focus on building a rich stable of thoroughbreds. And there plenty of scenarios to give the games a few twists. You can be a poor slob with $100 to wager during a day at the races, or you can or play as the pampered son of an industrialist, given a stable of horses to keep you amused.

The SVGA graphics are lovely, especially the horses themselves, which are rotoscoped for a very realistic look and feel as they thunder around the track. You can watch the action from the side, or from a neat top-down perspective. The sound, unfortunately, didn't get the attention that developers obviously paid to the graphics. There isn't much — just the pounding of hooves and a bit of crowd noise — and it adds little to the experience. A little track ambiance would have been nice since the races themselves are pretty lifeless to the ear.

The overhead perspective gives you an unusual look at the field, letting you watch the battle for position close to the rail.



And they're off! These rotoscoped thoroughbreds look and run like the real things.

Overall, *Hooves of Thunder* is a solid simulation, but if you aren't interested in horse racing or betting at the track, there's not much here for you. But if you've always wanted to try your luck with the ponies, *Hooves of Thunder* is a sure winner.

—*Lee Buchanan*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

82%

HIGHS: Exhaustive simulation of a horse racing operation.

LOWS: Not enough action for some gamers; better sound effects would help the track ambiance.

BOTTOM LINE: If the subject of world-class horse racing interests you, you'll love this game.

Zone Raiders

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Action

Developer: Image Space Incorporated

Publisher: Virgin
18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (714) 833-8710

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/50; 8MB RAM; DOS 5.0 or higher; 4MB hard-drive space	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 12MB RAM; 50MB hard-drive space; Supported sound card; Joystick

Take a quart of *Quarantine* and a dash of *Descent*, and you'll have a good idea of what this game is all about.

The enemies (like the little guy in the distance) don't look too intimidating, but they're *very* tenacious.

It seemed like a good idea at the time. Following the Reckoning, a limited nuclear exchange that effectively poisoned three quarters of the Earth's surface, the newly-formed Emergency Containment Organization sealed off the surviving cities and threw their less desirable citizens out into the radioactive Barrens to fend for themselves.

This served three very important purposes: It ensured the optimal distribution of dwindling resources for the Select ones, and it created a hardy band of outcasts who thrived in the wastelands even as the Select grew soft and fat in their sepulchral cities. But most importantly, it's the premise for *Zone Raiders*, a high-tech post-apocalyptic road trip that goes right for the jugular with its mix of driving challenge and shoot-'em-up fun.

Borrowing liberally from the Mad Max saga, *Zone Raiders* finds you prowling the Barrens between cities in a pre-Reckoning hovercar based on a vintage '64 T-bird chassis. A loner by choice, you nevertheless decide to join up with the Freedom Flight, a band of fellow Zoners who intend to find the legendary Free-Zone. Of course, you'll first have to earn their trust by proving yourself in action.

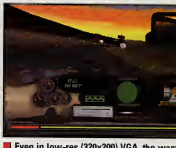
Once you start racking up the kills, the Freedom Flight will grant you access to their other specialized vehicles — a floating Ford pickup, hovering HUMVEE, flying Fusion Coupe and, if you're really sharp, the custom-configurable XCar Prototype. Each vehicle handles differently and carries a select weapon load, accessed *Doom*-style through the number keys. Knowing the terrain you'll be cruising makes vehicle selection an important tactical decision.

Zone Raiders contains 15 mission tracks spread out over three separate sections. Each section is home to competing Raiders and ECO vehicles, and you've only got a limited time to find your objectives before the powerful Guardian aircraft is released to hunt you down. Once you collect the last object, the exit opens and you'd better hightail it home, picking up any spare ammo and repair modules along the way.

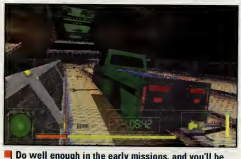
Unlike many of its peers (particularly *CyberSpeed* and *WipeOut*), which are so busy dazzling you with color and detail that they forget to be fun, *Zone Raiders* opts for a more subdued palette and an almost peaceful sense of isolation. There's something inherently intimate about scouting uncharted territory in an automobile; slowing down to get your bearings, backing up to check some detail you might have missed, and then screaming into a power slide spewing Mortars of Death at anyone unlucky enough to be riding your bumper. If you like, you can even play in Recon Mode, where no enemies are active, to simply enjoy the ride.

If you liked *Quarantine*, *Hi-Octane* and, especially, *Descent*, you're going to like *Zone Raiders*. It combines the best bits of each — driving, racing, exploring, and blasting through complex 3D environments — yet remains absolutely unique. And, yes, Virginia, there are Team and Sudden Death Network Modes for as many as four players.

— Scott Wolf



Even in low-res (320x200) VGA, the wastelands look pretty good.



Do well enough in the early missions, and you'll be "upgraded" from a classic T-Bird to this Ford pickup.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

89%

HIGHS: Excellent concept with fast and nimble vehicle physics.

LOWS: Occasional graphics glitches. No modem play.

BOTTOM LINE: Fun, fun, fun 'til your daddy takes the T-Bird away.

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Product Information Number 108

Jack The Ripper

Category: Mystery/Adventure

Developer: Intergalactic Development Inc.

Publisher: GameTek, Inc., 2999 N.E. 191st St., Suite 500, Aventura, FL 33180 (305) 935-3995

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 386/33; 4MB RAM; 5MB hard-disk space; SVGA; Sound Blaster or compatible; Mouse	486/66; 8MB RAM

Here's a solid, well-researched, easy-to-play whodunit about the great-granddaddy of all serial killers — and you can run it on a 386!

In the autumn of 1888, 51st year of the reign of Queen Victoria, a series of grisly murders occurred in the fog-shrouded lanes of London's working-class Whitechapel and Spitalfields boroughs. The barbarity of the crimes — the bodies of young prostitutes savagely mutilated with almost surgical precision — and the sheer audacity of the murderer, who taunted Scotland Yard with letters and eagerly embraced the moniker "Jack the Ripper," captured the Victorians' imagination as few other events had.

The fact that the list of suspects was incredibly long and varied (ranging from the Prince of Wales' son to a Malaysian ship's cook named Alaska), and that the Ripper's true identity has never been proven, only adds to the legend. There have been worse — much worse — serial killers, but "Saucy Jack" remains in a class by himself. He had *style*, and he seemed to embody all that was dark and suppressed in the Victorian psyche.

GameTek's version of the Ripper saga is a good, old-fashioned, Holmesian detective game. There are more clues available than Scotland Yard actually had (how else could you succeed where they failed?), but you have to work hard and think clearly to unearth them in order to find the connections and patterns that will lead you to your prime suspect.

In your study, you can review all the premise-clues you've collected and try to find significant connections or patterns. If you get the first two premises right, the computer will fill in the third and most revealing premise.

Difficulty levels are measured in terms of the time available to you to solve the crimes (before the Ripper gets you); you are scored 85 points for every clue you discover by searching locations, 75 points for every premise you discover and place in your detective's notebook, and 225 points every time you place two premises together so that they generate a third, and more revealing, premise. If you solve the mystery, you receive bonus points, divided by the number of days it took you to finish your investigation.

The interface is a pleasure to use. By clicking on a map of East End London, you can travel from location to location. Once there, a series of windows and slider-bars lets you interrogate whomever you find and organize any premise-clues or physical evidence that turns up. By clicking on your "study," you can ponder the accumulated evidence at your leisure.

The interface is well-designed and a pleasure to use.

There are no gratuitous puzzles and no inventory of bizarre objects to lug around — just the painstaking accumulation of evidence, tracking-down of leads, and logical deductive reasoning. In a sense, *Jack the Ripper* is a purist's game, and one that Sherlock Holmes fans will feel instantly comfortable with. Those seeking flashier, more action-packed PC entertainment may find these Victorian goings-on a bit too low-key, even too gentlemanly, for their tastes. I found it all quite refreshing, even relaxing.

Visit Scotland Yard for complete dossiers on all the persons you've interrogated, and look for odd details in, so to speak, the margins of the basic story.

The graphics, while nothing fancy, are suitably creepy and full of mood, and the original soundtrack music (whose composer really should have been credited in the documentation) is quite effective.

As I said, there's no high-tech gimmickry on display here, but if you're a lover of traditional detective stories, you'll find a solid, well-crafted game, rich with period atmosphere. For Ripper-philes, of course, the game recommends itself.

—*William R. Trotter*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

78%

HIGHS: Good, traditional, Sherlock-Holmesian detective game.

LOWS: May seem hum-drum to players weaned on high-velocity, graphics-intensive adventure games.

BOTTOM LINE: Nothin' fancy, but a solid addition to the ever-growing Ripper canon.

TriTryst

Win95

Category: Puzzle game

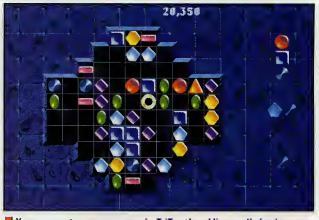
Developer: Virgin Interactive Ent.

Publisher: Virgin
18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine,
CA 92714 (714) 833-8710

Required	We Recommend
Windows 95; Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486/33DX; 8MB RAM; 1MB Video card	486/66; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

It takes a really good puzzle game for us to say that it's comparable to *Tetris*, the king-daddy of all puzzle games, but Virgin's *TriTryst* is a robust young challenger that's worthy of the comparison. The basic gameplay of *TriTryst* is similar to *Tetris*, with different colored squares that fall from the top of the screen, challenging you to align them with other pieces on the game board to make them disappear. If your board gets filled up, you lose the game.

While it's little more than another twist on *Tetris*, *TriTryst* has a couple of nice features that enhance its value. The classic game as described above is spiced up by several variations; bonus squares give you extra points; blocking squares limit your movements; and odd-shaped pieces can either help or hurt you depending on the size and shape of game board you're playing on. You also have the choice of using different game pieces, including gems and leaves, which add to the difficulty level.



You can create your own game in *TriTryst* by adding or eliminating squares from the game board.

There's also a challenging progressive game in which you must win (gain a certain number of points) at one board before you can move on to the next board. If you want an even bigger challenge, play on the advanced level, which times you and stacks unused pieces up on the side of the screen — and ends your game if you're not quick enough in placing them.

All of this adds up to fun puzzle gaming. Of course, if you're not into puzzle games, you won't like *TriTryst*. Replay value will depend on what kind of gamer you are and what your purpose is when playing games. If you're looking for a deep and meaningful experience to spend hours of time with, *TriTryst* is not for you. But if you want a simple Windows program that you can use as a break from the stress of work, *TriTryst* will do the trick. It's an engaging and light game that can be every bit as addictive as that old puzzle stand-by, *Tetris*.

—*Lisa M. Howie*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

83%

HIGHS: Good variety and challenging puzzle gameplay.

LOWS: Replay value depends on what you want; puzzle games just don't have a lot of depth.

BOTTOM LINE: *TriTryst* is a fun little puzzle game that's every bit as addictive as *Tetris*.

TV Guide Multimedia Crosswords

Category: Crossword

Developer: Trivia Works

Publisher: InterMedia, 3624 Market St., Suite 302, Philadelphia, PA 19104 (215) 387-0448

Required	We Recommend
CD-ROM drive; 386; 4MB RAM; Win 3.1+; Supported sound card	Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX/66; 8MB RAM

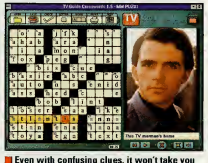
For decades, people have turned to their daily newspaper for their crossword fix. But as computers have flooded into homes, crossword publishers have been trying to reach a new audience on the PC. A few years ago, *Reader's Digest* and InterMedia released a multimedia crossword CD-ROM — a great idea, but one that failed to live up to its potential.

Now, InterMedia has teamed up with *TV Guide* to try to break the multimedia-crossword barrier. *TV Guide Multimedia Crosswords* offers you 30 puzzles that use text, video, music, and pictures as clues. Unfortunately, this doesn't make the crosswords more exciting, challenging, or enjoyable than those you'd find in the newspaper.

So what drags this disc down? The clues. Due to the video clips and sound bites, these become vague and confusing. It's hard to figure out what clue you need from a given snippet, and you often have to figure out two clues to find the word you are looking for. For example, the clue, "Geary's role on this series," was accompanied by a staff picture from "Northern Exposure." First, you have to figure out what television series the clue is talking about, and then you move on to the real clue, which is the character Cynthia Geary played. You spend more time trying to understand the clue than you do figuring out the answer.

Once you understand the clue, however, the words are often very easy to figure out. With clues such as "**** Wars" accompanied by a picture of Sir Alec Guinness in his Obi-Wan Kenobi robes, it's almost guaranteed that at least half of every puzzle will be too easy.

However, there are a couple of redeeming features: Auto-check tells you if you are typing in the correct letters, and you can even ask the computer to fill in a letter or a whole word when you get stuck. These features take away from the purity of the crossword puzzle, of course, but it is nice to be able to find out an answer quickly.



Even with confusing clues, it won't take you long to solve these crosswords.

Even better than these cheats are the 170 non-multimedia crosswords from past TV Guides. These aren't the focus of this disc, but their clues aren't nearly as confusing, and they're far more challenging than the multimedia puzzles.

—*Dean H. Renninger*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

53%

HIGHS: 170 crosswords; handy hint features.

LOWS: Confusing clues; lack of difficulty levels; poor use of multimedia; little challenge.

BOTTOM LINE: If you want to do a good crossword puzzle, why not pick up a newspaper?

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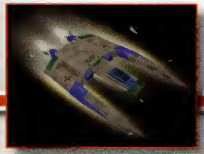

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Acclaim® entertainment, inc

Congo: Descent Into Zinj

Category: Graphic Adventure

Developer: Illumina

Publisher: Viacom New Media, 1515 Broadway, New York, NY 10036 (800) 469-2539

Required	We Recommend
Double speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX2/66MHz; 8MB RAM; VESA local-bus SVGA video card; Windows 3.1 or Windows 95; Mouse	Pentium; 4X CD-ROM drive; PCI SVGA card; Windows 3.1

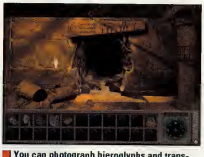
***Congo* bills itself as a game that makes *you* the endangered species. Guess that means unsatisfied gamers are nearing extinction....**

You might think a graphic adventure based on a mainstream Hollywood film would be geared toward inexperienced gamers (most movie licenses seem to be) but that's certainly not the case with *Congo*. In fact, the very people it will probably appeal to — new gamers who know the film — are the ones who'll find it the most frustrating.

The plot of *Congo* closely parallels that of the movie. You play the game as Jack Kisumu, an operative sent to find a diamond mine in the Congo. After you arrive and make your way up river, you learn that a previous expedition led by Karen Ross (the heroine from the film) has been decimated by an unknown primate. Your goal: Find the diamonds and save Karen.

You begin armed only with a knife, but soon find a TraviCom computer which lets you access a satellite map of your location, use homing devices to track Karen and Amy (a gorilla who talks through a combination of motion sensors and sign language), analyze images you've photographed, read background information on the region, communicate with your boss at TraviCom, and more.

From here, it's adventure gaming as usual, solving puzzles and gaining more information about the story. There's no denying that the puzzles in *Congo* are challenging, but the logic on which many of them are based is tenuous at best.



You can photograph hieroglyphs and translate them in order to gain clues, but after a while, keeping track of which hieroglyphs were found where can get pretty confusing.

For instance, there's one puzzle where you attempt to open the door leading to the Great Halls of the lost city of Zinj. You need six eyeballs to place in the door, but Amy runs away with one of them whenever you approach her. To get the eyeball, you have to tag her with a homing device and chase her around the jungle until you trap her in front of an altar — and you can only do that by approaching her from a certain direction. Why does she drop the eyeball at the altar? Who knows. I think you're supposed to deduce that this is where she found the eyeball, but that still doesn't explain why she would relinquish it to you in that spot.

The frustration doesn't end there. Why do the gorillas attack you when you put the eyeballs in the door? Because you didn't arm the two correct guns guarding the perimeter. How do you know which two of the four guns are correct? By noting which direction the gorillas attack from. Which means that the only way to solve the puzzle — aside from sheer luck — is to die first. And any puzzle that forces you to die first to receive clues as to its solution is not what I call well-designed.

Exacerbating all this is the lack of a "look" or "examine" command. You can't get info on an item even after you pick it up and put it in your inventory. At the start of the game, I wandered around the jungle for a good ten minutes before I tried placing what I thought was some type of carrying case on the river, and voila! — it was an inflatable raft! If I'd been able to examine the object in inventory, I'd have been on my way much sooner — and in a much happier mood, too.

It's one thing to be frustrated once or twice in a game; it's another to feel helpless and lost before you've even had a chance to get into the action. In the end, most gamers will find that *Congo* just doesn't offer enough excitement for all the patience it requires.

—Steve Poole

Whenever you enter a scene, be sure to move the cursor around to see if there are any objects you can use, even if they appear to be out of reach. In this scene, for instance, there's an idol on the opposite river bank — and you can push it without even entering the water!

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

57%

SIGNS: Simple interface, above-average acting.

LOWS: The solutions to puzzles are often far-fetched; inability to examine the items you pick up; steep system requirements.

BOTTOM LINE: Die-hard adventurers may like it, but most folks will toss up their hands in confusion.

Hyper 3-D Pinball

PC GAMER EDITORS' CHOICE

Category: Pinball simulation

Developer: NMS Software

Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment, 18061 Fitch Avenue, Irvine, CA 92714 (800) 874-4607

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM drive; 486DX/33; 8MB RAM; DOS 5.0+; 3MB HD space; SVGA	Quad-speed CD-ROM drive; Pentium; 16MB RAM; Supported sound card

If you've taken a look in the software stores lately, you've probably noticed that you could fill an arcade with all the computer pinball titles that are currently on the market — and many more are on their way. But after playing the new pinball title from Virgin, I know one thing: It'll take one whupass program to outshine *Hyper 3-D Pinball*. It looks, sounds, and feels more like real pinball than any other game I've tried, and with seven tables, it offers more bang for your buck, too.

The game supports three modes of resolution (320 x 200, 640 x 480, and 800 x 600) and three different perspectives (2D scrolling, 3D scrolling, and 3D full table), making for a wide variety of gameplay views. While you can't simply mix and match perspectives and resolutions — only 640 x 480 lets you use all three perspectives, and if you don't have 16MB of RAM you can only pick two to switch between during play — the chances are good you'll find one that suits your taste.

The 2D view in Hyper 3-D Pinball features crisp graphics, but you don't get to see very much of the table.

Fortunately, a single keystroke can switch you to this full-table view to let you line up shots.

Once you find a view and perspective and start hitting the flippers, you'll find that *Hyper 3-D* delivers the action to go along with its exquisite graphics. Ball physics have a few quirks, but overall this is the sweetest pinball action this side of a real coin-op. Each table boasts photorealistic graphics, convincing sound effects, and an appropriate soundtrack (cool 1930s jazz for The Gangster, carnival music for Fun Fair, a heavy rock riff for Road King, etc.) that plays directly from the CD. And if you hit the right targets, you'll be treated a cool computer animation clip that really does enhance the total experience.

If the system requirements weren't so steep, and if you could adjust a few more gameplay variables — table angle, balls per game, tilt sensitivity, etc. — this game would be nearly perfect. Even without those extras, though, *Hyper 3-D Pinball* delivers all the action a pinball fan could want.

— Steve Poole

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Photorealistic graphics; fantastic sound; plenty of great tables.

LOWS: Steep system requirements; 3D perspective takes getting used to.

BOTTOM LINE: If you're a pinball fan with a fast computer, this one's a keeper.

90%

Tempest 2000

Category: Arcade

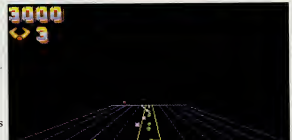
Developer: Atari Interactive

Publisher: Atari Interactive, 1196 Borregas Ave., Sunnyvale, CA 94089 (800) 462-8274

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM; 386; 4MB RAM; SVGA	486; Supported sound card; Gamepad

I can remember a time when *Tempest* was my all-time favorite arcade game. A friend of mine had purchased an old, used coin-op version of it, and we used to spend hours in his garage, spinning that crusty ol' dial like crazy until our hands got callused from the effort. But times change, and as the age and power of computers grow, so does the taste of game players.

It seems Atari didn't take this into account with their *Tempest 2000* title. *Tempest* was at the forefront of technology in its time, however, *Tempest 2000* is virtually the same as the arcade game, only now it's on a PC that has advanced light years from those primitive processors. Sure, they've filled in the spaces between the line vectors a bit, added a little color and texture to some of the aliens you shoot at, and there's a bit more variety than the arcade version with new abilities, but it's essentially the same old game you remember from the arcade.



Tempest 2000 doesn't look much different from its predecessor, but the AI droid is a nice addition to your arsenal.

And unless you're overcome with nostalgia for the arcade game, *Tempest 2000* won't entertain you for long. The two other games that come with this one — Tempest Plus and Tempest Duel — add a certain amount of replay value, but just can't keep the pace of today's computer games. Tempest Plus is the old arcade *Tempest*, with the new colored graphics and no power-ups. You can play with either an AI droid or another player. It's a nice experience to share, especially if you and your partner work together well. Tempest Duel is just the opposite — you play *against* another player. An interesting, if quickly tiring, multi-player form.

But overall, *Tempest 2000* just doesn't seem like much of a leap from its older arcade ancestor. It's got some color, and some cool sound, but really the only difference lies in the power-ups, which really aren't that exciting. Considering the power behind computers today, it's disappointing that the next generation of *Tempest* doesn't live up to the excitement of the first. One thing's for sure — no one is going to get calluses on their fingers from playing this one.

—Michael Wolf

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

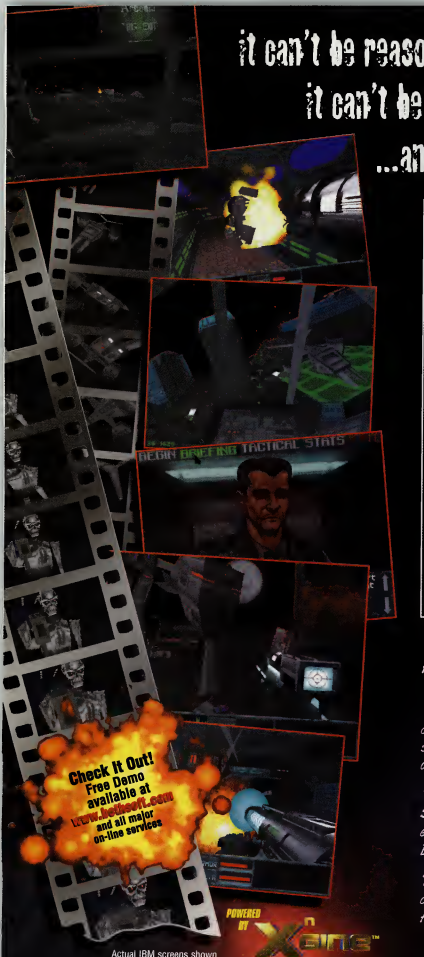
HIGHS: It's still *Tempest* — a classic.

LOWS: The graphics are dated, and it's no fun to control.

BOTTOM LINE: If you're looking for a PC version of *Tempest*, this is it — but if you're looking for something to take *Tempest* to the next level, keep waiting.

59%

it can't be reasoned with,
it can't be bargained with...
...and it absolutely will not stop.



Actual IBM screens shown

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—PC-ZONE

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*"Look for **Bethesda Softworks** to have competitors running scared in the near future..."* **—Computer Game Review**

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Product Information Number 99

The 11th Hour

Category: Puzzle Game

Developer: Trilobyte, Inc.

Publisher: Virgin Interactive Entertainment, Inc., 18061 Fitch Ave., Irvine, CA 92714 (714) 833-8710

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM; 486DX2/66; 8MB RAM; Local Bus Video; DOS 5.0+; 4MB hard-drive space; Sound card; Mouse	Quad-speed CD-ROM; Pentium; 2MB PCI video card

The locked door to vaporware limbo has been thrown wide, and out slithers the *7th Guest* sequel — but it may be too little too late.

It's been four years since Virgin dazzled the gaming world with *The 7th Guest*, and since that time the burning question has gone forth, "When's the damn sequel gonna be ready?" Well, take a look out your window — Hell has frozen over, and *The 11th Hour* is finally here. Was it worth the wait? Kinda-sorta.

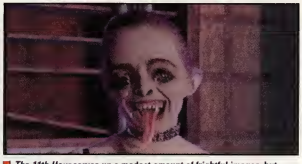
The story opens 70 years after the spirit of Henry Stauf was vanquished in *7TG*, but evil is once again afoot in the town of Harley. And wouldn't you know it — Robin Morales, producer of television's "Case Unsolved" has disappeared while investigating that evil.

You play dim-witted Carl Denning, investigative reporter for that very same show and the boyfriend of Robin. Packing a tiny GameBook computer, you head off to the Stauf Mansion to do battle with ... Skeletons? Vampires? Great bloody blathering ghosts?

Nope. Puzzles.

Maybe I'm missing the point here, but I kept waiting for something scary to happen. This is, after all, the Mount Everest of haunted houses. But, no — the house is nice and quiet, with only a series of logic puzzles, beautifully conceived and frightfully difficult, to assault you.

The game is structured like a treasure hunt, played out over five hours, from 7 p.m. to midnight. Solving a puzzle reveals a clue to an object in the house; finding the right object rewards you with a high-resolution video snippet from the live-action back story. At the end of each hour, you play a game against Stauf himself (or his disembodied voice, at any rate), whose put-downs of your every unsuccessful gambit become irritating in a real hurry.



***The 11th Hour* serves up a modest amount of frightful images, but most scenes are too brief to be really horrifying.**

With only your flashlight for illumination, you prowl the familiar preset pathways in search of objects and puzzles. I must admit, it felt good to be back in the old place, and it's interesting to see how Trilobyte updated the decor before letting it fall into highly stylized disrepair.

Though it is graphically superior to its predecessor, *11th Hour* demonstrates a mystifying lack of innovation and makes system demands slightly less realistic than the Republican Party's balanced budget proposal. High-end 486 users may even find themselves forced to select monaural sound and a gray-scale display (called "Spooky Mode" to soften the blow) in order to run the game smoothly.

The things that *11th Hour* does right, it does superbly. The 3D rendering of objects is exquisite; the musical soundtrack is once again served up hot and tasty, and the bizarre endgame now provides you with a classical choice of conclusions (Door Numbers One, Two and Three). There are even WAD files of the Stauf Mansion included on one of the discs for use with *Doom*, *Doom II* & *Heretic*! Novice puzzlers get a helping hand with a techno-psychic ally, accessed through the GameBook, to help you with the puzzles, and the map can be used to jump directly to any room you've gained access to.

But the negatives, including the lame "Twin Peaks"-clone movie script, and the no-way-to-escape-'em credit sequence (complete with maudlin photos of the designers' kids and pets), may prove infuriating for some. In the end, fans of *7TG* will find that the *11th Hour* is an attractive but uninspired return to familiar territory — and probably not worth four years of waiting. While I suspect Virgin is hoping new gamers will get sucked in by the graphic beauty and promise of horrific sights, the *11th Hour* is best left to traditional puzzle fans.

—*Scott Wolf*

Expect to find more of *The 7th Guest*'s logic puzzles in *The 11th Hour*. This one involves mastering the age old mysteries of doll-house furniture.

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

76%

HIGHS: Looks and sounds great (with proper hardware).

LOWS: Puzzles still seem unrelated to the game's story; limited innovations not worth the performance penalty.

BOTTOM LINE: A good puzzle game; lots of patience and a nitro-fuel burning PC recommended.

This Means War!

Category: Wargame

Developer: Star Jammer Studios

Publisher: MicroProse Software, Inc. 180 Lakefront Drive, Hunt Valley, MD 21030-22454 (401) 771-1151

Required	We Recommend
Double-speed CD-ROM; 486/33; 6MB RAM; Windows 3.1 or higher; CDROM/MS-CDEX 2.23 or higher; 20MB hard-disk space; SVGA; Mouse	Pentium; 8MB RAM; Supported sound card

This *Command & Conquer* wannabe won't win any action-strategy game fans with its confusing interface and smudgy graphics.

I get a queasy feeling whenever I install a game whose README.TXT file is almost as long as the manual. To me, that's a dead giveaway that A) There's a lot of important stuff missing from the manual; or B) There are some holes in the game that will give you trouble if you're not forewarned about them. In the case of *This Means War!*, it's C) A generous helping of both A and B — but let's not get ahead of ourselves.

The basic premise of the game is this: In the last years of the 20th Century, a game called *Snark Hunter* (created by a mysterious programmer known only as "Shadowhawk") suddenly appeared on all the online services and captured the imaginations of gamers to a fanatical degree. Everybody was playing it, obsessively, until 12:01 AM, March 15 (year unspecified), when a mega-virus hidden in the game infected every computer system on the planet.

Stock markets collapsed, mechanical systems shut down, international communications blacked out, and the world was plunged into violence and chaos — except for small pockets of organization scattered around the globe, where charismatic cult leaders and ideological crackpots managed to establish private fiefdoms. These, in turn, grew into nascent empires bent on expansion, conquest, and — dare I say it — *ruling the world!*

If you just want to blow up stuff, you'll have ample opportunity in the game — and the pyrotechnic graphics are nice, at least.

Naturally, the Good Guys scrambled to get their act together, created the Free World Alliance, and set about restoring order by first halting, then rolling back the despotic empires that had established control over several large chunks of the planet.

The game plays out in real time, very much like *Command & Conquer*, as you develop and hoard resources, set up R&D facilities to crank out new and better weapons, and assume tactical control over your forces in either defensive or offensive engagements. A global map, using different colors for the different factions, shows you how the overall war is progressing.

Each side has a Command Center; knock out the enemy's, and you win — ditto, in reverse, if he knocks out yours. Other structures include farms, mines, oil wells, steel mills, and factories. Click on the Command Center and drag to a suitable clear area, and you can establish a new population center. All other structures have to be laboriously built by engineers.

But squeezing what should be endless hours of fun out of *TMW!* is nearly impossible, thanks to an interface that is an unholy mess. For example, if you click on an engineer to get him to build something, you also have to right-click to find out what he's capable of building at that stage of the game (why not one click that shows it all?). For the first half-dozen battles, he'll need to build barracks to turn out infantry. But time after time, I clicked on "Barracks," then — when no barracks-construction appeared — I selected the engineer again, only to find that the computer had moved my check-mark to "farm," or "bridge," or "steel mill" — none of which are high, or even logical, priorities when you're under heavy attack.

Sometimes, the engineer will start to work as soon as you give him an order, but at other times you have to re-click on the command center, click on "stop," then click on "go" again to get the engineer to function. Why? You've got me — neither the manual nor the README.TXT file offers any explanation. And while you're screwing around trying to unravel the mysteries of the interface, the enemy is relentlessly assaulting you, and you desperately need the new troops those unconstructed barracks would have been turning out.

Here's a typical Good Guy complex, centered around the Command Center. The interaction between resources and their use is crucial to victory, but the manual leaves you in the dark about many important matters.

There may be some bizarre strategic connections that become apparent if you get far enough into the game — but frankly, I got so pissed off at it after hours and hours of trying to figure out what was happening and why, that I completely lost interest.

Somewhere beneath this heap of confusion is the germ of a really fun, lightweight, wargame; unfortunately, it seems the designers didn't know how to bring it forth, or MicroProse just didn't care enough to make them do it.

—*William R. Trotter*

PC GAMER FINAL VERDICT

49%

HIGHS: Some of the explosion graphics are kinda neat...

LOWS: Manual omits necessary information; interface is a muddle; graphics are primitive.

BOTTOM LINE: Go buy yourself a copy of *Command & Conquer* instead. You'll thank us.

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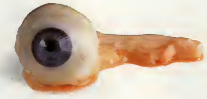

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Join the Dark Side of the Force

Around the *PC Gamer* offices, *TIE Fighter* has a spot in everybody's all-time top ten list. Anyone who disagrees gets tied to a wicker chair and forced to watch 24 hours straight of *The Richard Bey Show* until they realize the error of their ways.

So when LucasArts announced that they would be giving *TIE Fighter* the full high-res, super-deluxe CD-ROM treatment, we all just about wet ourselves. Recalling the red-carpet treatment they gave the *X-Wing Collector's CD-ROM*, we knew it would be pretty exciting, and we weren't wrong. Graphics resolution now goes as high as 640x480 (as opposed to the usual 320x200) in the combat sequences, so battles now look stunning. Small details have been added, like rotating gun turrets on the big ships and stations, and more sophisticated shading techniques on all the 3D objects. Gameplay hasn't been reduced at all, and even in high resolution, the frame rates are good and the craft are responsive.

Cut scenes have been spiffed up a little bit, with some new animation and voice acting throughout, but many still look pretty much the same. Altogether there are a hundred missions, including all the original missions, those from the *Defender of the Empire* add-on disk, and a new set called *Enemies of the Empire*. New missions look pretty diverse, with a tricky escort mission, some strikes, and other battles drawing on the full range of TIE spacecraft. These include the Fighter, Bomber, Interceptor, Defender, Assault Gunboat, and the new Star Wing, an assault fighter/gunboat.

Still missing are a mission builder and head-to-head play, both of which would be a delight — but this is quibbling; besides, both of those features are rumored to be in the works for the next-generation Star Wars game in development at LucasArts. Regardless, *TIE Fighter Collector's CD-ROM* gives a great game a fine polish and revitalizes it for a whole new batch of computer users. If you miss this, you're missing some of the best action PC gaming has to offer.

With its new ships, new missions, and high-resolution Super VGA graphics, the *TIE Fighter Collector's CD-ROM* goes far beyond the usual CD update.

CivNet

Even after four years, I still consider MicroProse's *Civilization* to be PC gaming's finest moment, so it's no surprise that I was pretty excited about *CivNet*. This long-promised head-to-head version of *Civilization* promised to deliver modem-to-modem, network, BBS, hot-seat, and Internet play for up to eight players. And, although you'll run into the standard connection speed-bumps in *CivNet*, it succeeds admirably in fulfilling its promise.

A new map-making utility in *CivNet* lets you build custom maps featuring 12 different terrain types

Some basic details, first: *CivNet* is a Windows-only (3.1 or 95) version of the classic, with a retooled interface much like *Civilization for Windows*. New features include multiple city windows, a configurable screen, and a king/queen-builder to create your own special "look." There's also a very nifty world-builder feature that lets you create your own maps, although the added ability to create fully developed civilizations and scenarios would have been good.

For online play, you can make a direct modem connection, load it onto a network, or log onto the Internet with TCP/IP. With Internet play, you have to enter an IP address where other players can be found. The best way to put an Internet game together is to go to *http://rek.microprose.com/civnet/index.html* and register as a player. Other online services also have spots where people put together head-to-head games. Gameplay seems pretty clean, although there are of course some glitches and crashes, as is expected with head-to-head play. With human opponents, you can now engage in negotiations with a chat feature and set up complex alliances

T. Liam McDonald

TIE Fighter was already one of the best PC games of all time; leave it to LucasArts to make the CD version so much better that even gamers who already own the original will have to have it.

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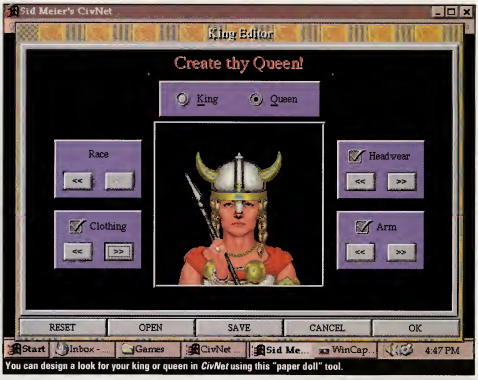

You can design a look for your king or queen in *CivNet* using this "paper doll" tool.

(or webs of deceit). Play can either be phased or simultaneous, and games take on a much more intense and challenging feel.

CivNet is now easily the leader of online strategy games, offering the most flexibility and the most complex play — and there's really nothing quite like playing the most complex PC game against "the most dangerous game:" another person.

Other News

MechWarrior II for Win95, along with *NetMech* and the *Expansion Pack,* just arrived this week, and the first look seems good. *NetMech,* the long-awaited multi-player add-on for *Mech II,* offers LAN and modem support only (not Internet), and although the Win95 version seems fussy at times, it's been okay so far. More on this next month.

Word from Origin is that the *Bioforge* expansion disk I announced last month has been "indefinitely shelved for artistic reasons." For the layman, "indefinitely shelved" frequently means "we stomped that sucker *flat.*" PCG

A Win95 version and two add-ons are the latest additions to the *Mech II* family.

Bug Patches

***11th Hour* Beta 2.42 Player:** Improves performance on lower-end machines. It is currently *not* supported by Virgin or Trilobyte (i.e., they put it out so you could beta test it for them). However, it does help to eliminate choppy audio on some systems.

***Absolute Zero* (Domark):** Corrects a nasty crash bug in the Hammer & Anvil scenarios.

***Crusader: No Remorse* v.1.21 (Origin):** Adds features and fixes common problems.

***Empire II* (New World):** Fixes all known problems.

***IndyCar Racing II* Paintkit Update (Papyrus):** Corrects a bug where a stripe down the center of the car may not be painted. This problem only occurs in version 1.0 of the Paintkit.

***PBA Bowling* v.1.12 (Bethesda):** General maintenance patch.

***Riddle of Master Lu* v.2.05 (Windows) (Sanctuary Woods):** Fixes jumpy mouse movement, switch problems in the billiard room, and the "player_enters_scene" fatal error.

***Stonekeep* v.1.2 (Interplay):** General maintenance patch.

***Su-27* New and Revised Missions (SSI):** contains revisions to several of the training missions provided with the V1.0 release of SU-27 FLANKER. An additional six "Airmanship" missions are provided that include recorded flights to demonstrate various flight techniques.

***The Need For Speed* (EA):** Fixes CD-ROM SEEK error.

***Thunderscape* v.1.1 (SSI):** Fixes all known bugs.

***Unnecessary Roughness '96* (Accolade):** Fixes both sound and video.

***Wing Commander IV* Demo Update (Origin):** Fixes video problems in the interactive demo.

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Product Information Number 95

Making Math Manageable

If any academic subject fits the computer best, math would have to be the proverbial hand that slides effortlessly into the bit-based glove. After all, what is a computer? It's an adding machine on steroids, a math whiz to beat all math whizzes — a number cruncher.

Rarely have I seen math programs that really stun me, though. Broderbund's *Math Workshop* comes to mind. The program's educational design was hardly innovative, but its setting was so engaging, you barely noticed how ordinary most of the practice sessions were.

In one week, I received three very different kinds of math programs. Each one dazzled me in its own way, but one teetered off balance in its educational approach, and another one crashed my computer. The third held my four-year-old spellbound for hours, though, while I fought off the flu this past winter.

Mathemagics

In Junior High School and Senior High School, I flunked almost as many math classes as I passed. You'd never guess that I actually *liked* math. In fact, I was fascinated by the way numbers work. You can put the same numbers together in a handful of different ways and always come up with the same result. Really cool.

Dr. Arthur Benjamin probably didn't flunk math, but he said the same thing in *Mathemagics*, L3 Interactive's new program for people 10 years old and older. Like me, Benjamin is fascinated by the ways you can manipulate figures and still figure up the same results. To spread his enthusiasm and knowledge, Benjamin developed a series of math tricks called *Mathemagics*. These tricks teach just about anyone how to calculate pretty big math problems in his or her head.

We're talking squaring two-, three-, and four-digit numbers. We're talking adding and multiplying similarly large numbers. That's about as far as I got. I couldn't even remember the two numbers I was manipulating, let alone the results — but I'm not giving up.

Based on a cube-shaped interface, *Mathemagics* is simple to navigate, and it works quite smoothly. Each category of lessons occupies one of the nine squares on one face of a cube. When you choose one of the squares, a row of squares detaches from the cube. From that row, you can choose a lesson a demonstration of a math trick, an explanation of the math trick, or a re-enactment of how the trick can be useful in everyday life. Spin the cube around to the back side, and you can access program options and help. The cube metaphor feels concrete. It's easy for kids to grasp and easy to learn.

Not so easy to grasp and learn are the mathematical tangos and fox-trots that Benjamin is trying to teach, but he explains them well with lean lectures and clear graphic representations of the process. Unfortunately, the video clips of Benjamin sitting on a stool as he delivers the information are duller than almost any math lecture I've ever attended. But the information is easy to gather, and the man is obviously impassioned about the topic.

Also unfortunately, the value of the program ends here. I learned the tricks, but I didn't get to practice them online. I heard the examples, but I didn't feel like I could generalize them well. Mostly, I didn't develop the skill of remembering the numbers as I constructed them.

It was like learning tennis by watching it. You get out there to play, and you have no muscle memory, no court sense, no feel for the playing surface. You hit too hard, you miscalculate where the action will occur, you trip.

While technically sound and academically clear, many of *Mathemagics*' videos featured dull stagings of Dr. Benjamin lecturing from a stool.

Benjamin should have included practice sessions, lots of them. He should have let you unfold the problem in your head and then unfold it on screen to see if you were unfolding it properly. *Mathemagics* should be the sum of an informative tutorial and several practice sessions, but Benjamin only offers the first part.

The program is worth the money if you have a natural interest in numbers; Benjamin may introduce you to a dimension of math that you never knew about. He may give you new ideas for how to play with digits. He may even trick kids who didn't think math was cool before. They may get sucked into the sorcery they can perform when they understand how numbers work. To put these new ideas into practice, however, you'll have to turn to the world outside *Mathemagics*.

NFL Math

Sanctuary Woods offers a program more likely to entice kids, 8 to 10 years old, onto the math team. *NFL Math* combines a complex football simulation with a wide variety of math problems. The program features clutch plays and awesome tactics all over the field.

You choose strategies for each down — nickel defense, blitz, flea flicker, sweep, and so on. The

Heidi E. H. Aycock

Nothing crunches numbers better than a computer, and Heidi has found a trio of educational programs that use the PC to turn mathemathics into fun for kids.

NFL MATH

An arcade-style sequence breaks up the math exercises and football plays with a little manual dexterity practice in the well-rounded *NFL Math*.

In *NFL Math*, the lower half of the screen holds the math quizzes, and the small monitor up top holds some of the finest animated football sequences around.

program tosses out a math question, and, if you answer correctly, the play proceeds as planned. Sometimes the play works; sometimes it doesn't. I never figured out how my performance on the math problems affected my team's performance on the field, but the one time I chose a wrong answer, my team got a penalty.

At the beginning of each quarter, *NFL Math* offers an arcade style game that improves your passing, running, and blocking power. This feature rounds out the program beautifully, mixing strategy, drill, and dexterity exercises in one package.

In its presentation, *NFL Math* dazzles — particularly the animated game sequences. The programmers accurately reconstructed the football players' body shapes, their odd running style, and their stances as they wait on the sidelines. The sound, though choppy on my computer, was almost as realistic as the animation. Grunts, cocky comments, and disappointed moans added dimension to the game. Only the announcer seemed contrived and stiff.

In its educational design, the program is more ordinary, but still fine. On the easy level, players read charts, put data in order, and complete equations as quickly as possible. What's unusual about the problems is how they all pertain to the NFL. Sometimes the connection is tenuous, but always the questions refer to football. For a child who may prefer Monday night with Frank Gifford and Al Michaels to Pythagoras and Pascal, this program offers the perfect mix. Maybe enough of a mix to create a math Marino out of a math mouse.

NFL Math's only drawback on my machine was its technical fragility. The program crashed on my computer twice. Technical support suggested that the problem was caused by my video driver, but the driver has worked fine for plenty of other software. Make sure you have a money-back guarantee if you buy *NFL Math*, in case it fumbles on your machine, too. But I encourage you to buy this package as a great training program for kids who need practice with math.

James Discovers Math

For younger kids, appropriate math practice oozes out of Broderbund's latest early-childhood offering, *James Discovers Math*. Designed for kids three to six years old, the program features an electronic storybook and nine math games.

The story follows James as he squishes, mashes, and spits his way through his mother's groceries. From the first shattered watermelon to the five smeared blueberries and beyond, James makes a delicious mess of the counting game. In the end, his mother imposes an amusing and logical consequence for the young boy's mischief.

The games include some typical props, such as a talking clock and a jukebox. But it also features some number fun with a new twist. The measuring game, for example, encourages children to estimate how many pencils will equal the length of one of James' seven friends, including an Elvis-impersonating lizard, an assertive mouse, and James' mother. On each turn, the size of the pencils changes. The manual suggests trying this in the real world, measuring things with spoons, combs, and other ordinary objects.

Besides the excellent educational design, the program features wonderful graphics and some fine attention to detail. The graphic style of *James Discovers Math* stands apart from many other programs. Like such visually interesting packages as Broderbund's own *Ruff's Bone* and Headbone Interactive's *Elroy Goes Buzzerk*, *James Discovers Math* uses simple but suggestive cyber-brush strokes that evoke a flavor rather than representing a scene — more like a Calvin and Hobbes comic strip than Prince Valiant. Also adding to the visual beauty is the minor issue of James' eyes. The programmers have included a routine so that James' eyes follow the mouse cursor around the screen. This effect has been available for a long time; back when X-Windows first came out on Unix workstations, this was one of the goofy little utilities you could run to show that you were really multitasking. On workstations, it was next to useless, but in *James Discovers Math*, it creates the illusion of attentiveness in the main character. Rather than staring off into space while teapots tango, James watches the hot spots on the screen as you activate them. It's a small thing, but adds great depth to the program.

Of the three packages I evaluated this month, *James* is certainly the most polished, most robust, and most amusing. If *NFL Math* runs well on your machine, it will entertain older kids as well as grownups. As a secondary benefit, football widows and widowers can learn a little more about the game. Just about anyone will learn a little more about math from Dr. Benjamin's *Mathemagics*, but his program offered the thinnest educational experience of all. Given the choice between *Mathemagics* in a paper-based book or on CD-ROM, I'd choose the book. I hope to see more Learning Cube offerings, however; the interface is beautiful.

PCG

JAMES DISCOVERS MATH

Kids learn to estimate and measure by guessing how many pencils it will take to measure the length of strange creatures.

A counting story looks more like a detergent commercial as James grinds five ripe blueberries into his shirt.

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Product Information Number 180

One Hand Giveth, The Other Giveth the Finger

I just lost ten bucks to my pet squirrel.

When all of the beeping and sqeaking about censoring the Internet began, I said to him, "You watch, Chuki (for that is his name), I'll bet you ten bucks those lamers at Prodigy are the first to cave."

"No way, Senor Lobo," he replied (it's a mystery how he can not only effect human speech, but pepper it with Spanish as well).

"What?!" I gasped. "Surely you don't think that America Online will betray its very name and stifle its subscribers' First Amendment rights?"

"Get real," he said. "Who would you least expect to crumble under pressure from a foreign country that banned MicroProse's *Gunship* because it was deemed too violent?"

"Uh...GEnie?", I ventured.

"You're venturing," he spat. "Try again."

"Uh...GEnie?," I tried again. (He's never seen *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, so I pull this one on him all the time.)

"No, I meant try again and name a different service."

"Well, then, it can only be Delphi," I said triumpantly.

Chuki peed on my head and sank a needle-sharp claw into my arm. "And you call *me* a weenwapper! It's CompuServe, you dork! CompuServe!"

"No way!"

"Yes, way!"

"No way!"

"Yes, way!" (This went on for several days, until, finally...)

"No effing way!"

"Yes, effing way! Here, read this..." He tore a page off the newspaper lining the bottom of his Squirrel House and handed it to me.

Damn! The little rodent was right. Less than a week after releasing version 2.01 of WinCIM, which finally allows CIS subscribers to access the Internet (particularly the World Wide Web) from *within* WinCIM, CompuServe crumbled under pressure from the German government, who threatened to shut down CIS in the Fatherland, and removed access to all Usenet newsgroups with references to...uhh...like, huh-huh-huh... sex and stuff. Words, pictures, everything.

Good lord, if I'd wanted a bunch of cowardly know-it-alls restricting my intellectual intake, I wouldn't have thrown my parents into the wood chipper when I was a child (Oops — did I just share too much?). Unfortunately, this is typical of the way things are done here in New America. So they'll lose a few Deutschmarks in subscriber fees. Boo-hoo. In the old America, CIS would have said, "You don't like the way we do things, take a hike, Hans!"

I mean, it's not like that material isn't still available elsewhere. Jeez — that's what the Internet is supposed to be about: Worldwide access to unlimited resources for one and all. And don't get me started on the pornography issue. I'm sorry, but there's nothing obscene about anything consenting adults choose to do with, or to, each other. (Keywords: *Consenting* and *Adults*. Child porn is another story entirely, and if you're into that stuff, stop reading this column and go immolate yourself on a public highway.)

My point is that it's asinine to restrict things for one group of law-abiding people while leaving them available to another. Some examples:

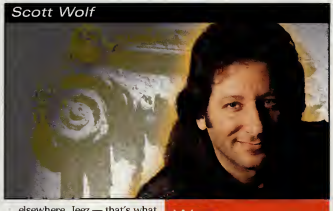
You can now drive 75 miles per hour on the highways of some states; in others, going 1 mph over 55 can result in losing your license.

In my home state, owning a machine gun will get you ten years in prison and a $10,000 fine. In the states next door, it's "Certainly, sir. Will that be VISA or American Express?"

Drug laws vary so wildly from state to state that penalties for the same offense run from a "parking ticket" to hefty fines and serious jail time.

Meanwhile, in response to the overwhelmingly negative reaction from outraged subscribers, CompuServe began quietly reinstating access to the newsgroups in question and plans to implement new software screening that will protect the delicate sensibilities of those Wacky Wunderlanders by granting them the lack of access they so dearly desire.

Scott Wolf



Was CompuServe's brief cave-in to German demands a sign of the erosion of freedom of speech in America, or just a really silly business decision?

Wolf & Win95, Part 2

I've already gone on record as hating Windows 95, but I'm trying to like it — honestly, I am. I've watched UAV's *EZ Windows 95 Install N' Run*, WinStruct's *Microsoft Windows 95 - Getting Started* (produced by two former MS Windows Product Managers) and read IDG's *Windows 95 For Dummies*; They're all good at explaining the basics of Microsoft's megalomaniacal operating system, but *none* of them explain how to do some of the things that *I* want to do.

"Of course you can do it," my guru says. "Microsoft just doesn't want you to."

Next up, I'm siccing Symantec's *Norton Navigator* on the bitch. Stay tuned.

Surf 'N' See

Here's a few more URLs from off the beaten path:

- ***http://www.comicspage.com/aaron*** - Cool new syndicated comic strip.
- ***http://www.cowboytrail.com*** - The Old West lives again.
- ***http://ica.ir.iac.org.nz/index.html*** - Gateway to Antarctica.
- ***http://www.mancow.com*** - Chicago DJ and major tool.
- ***http://members.aol.com/ianfirthds/index.htm*** - Prairie Dog Hunt: The Mind Behind
- ***http://www.nightstand.com*** - The Anti-Christ of talk shows.
- ***http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/95fact*** - The CIA's World Fact Book.
- ***http://www.pubweb.parc.xerox.com/map*** - Play with a Cray!
- ***http://www.vocaltec.com*** - the Internet Wave sound utility for Web browsers.
- ***http://www.weenwapper.com*** (not up yet) - Weenwappers anonymous.

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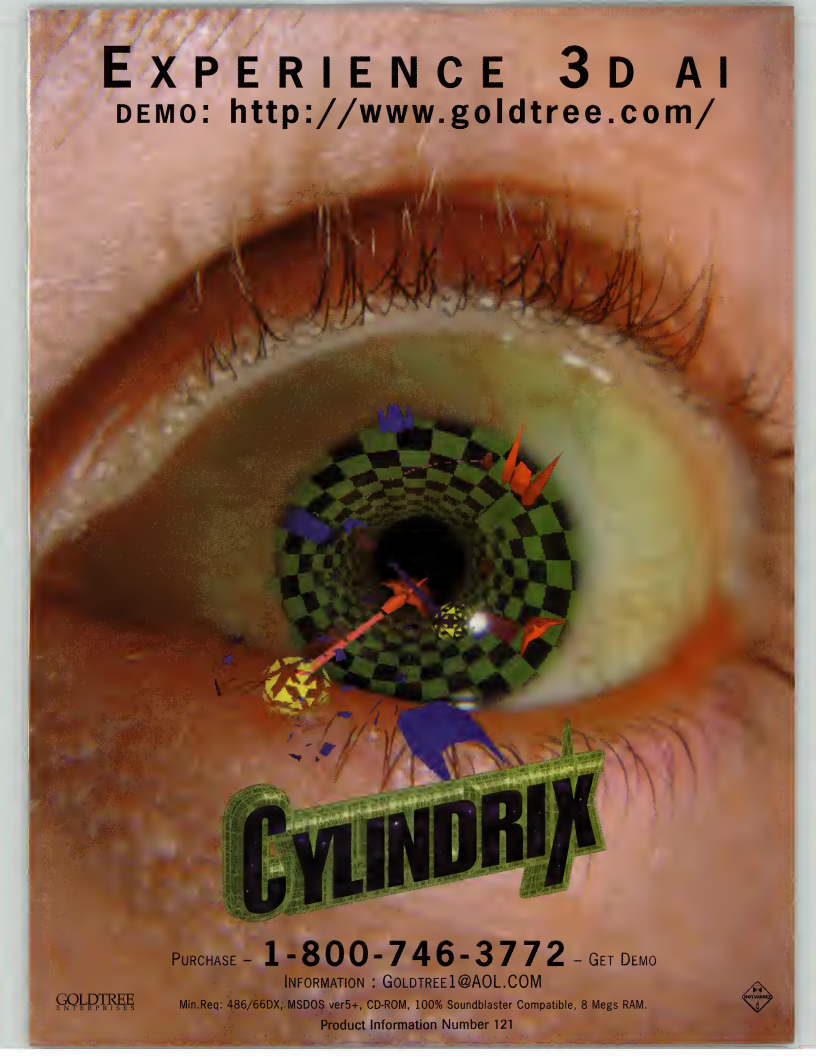

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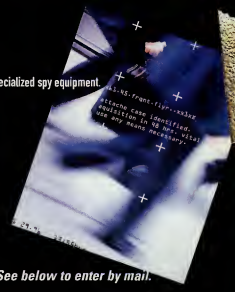

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Product Information Number 168

The Walls are Crumbling at Last

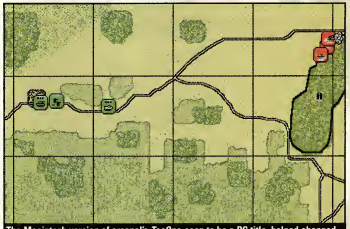
A decade or so ago, when I started reviewing computer wargames, the genre was not taken seriously by the professional military hierarchy, because the games were, well ... games. Even the best boardgames were dismissed as a hobby for dweebs with dreams of Napoleonic glory.

Real battlefields, of course, are not covered with hex-grids, and when the Pentagon wanted to stage computerized exercises, it employed huge mainframe systems, costing tens of millions of dollars, dubbed with acronyms like "JANUS." Access to these systems was limited — they were about as portable as battleships and it cost a fortune to run simulations on them. Only a relatively small number of career officers ever got to "play" on these systems, and it was considered bad form even to refer to them as "games." Ambitious younger officers, many of whom kept a locker full of Avalon Hill titles to play with their colleagues during free time, knew it was a Bad Career Move to let it be known that they played off-the-shelf wargames; such activity was frowned upon as being frivolous, about on par with building model airplanes.

Quietly but pervasively, that attitude has been changing. The generation that grew up playing board games and the early generation of PC games is now moving into the higher levels of command. They are wargame-literate, they know what good commercial wargames are all about, and they understand — as their predecessors never could — the enormous potential of PC wargames as professional training tools.

Perhaps the most tangible sign of this sea-change is the news that the United States Marine Corps is preparing to purchase at least 5,000 units of the game *TacOps II* from its developer, Arsenal Software.

But let's back up a minute: Over a year ago, a Desktop General column announced that the IBM version of *TacOps I* was going to appear "soon." Well, as often happens in this business, "soon" turned into a year and the game is still obtainable only in its Mac format. So the Desktop General decided to pay a visit to James Degoey, head of Arsenal Software, to find out what happened, as well as to get the scoop on the new and rapidly burgeoning relationship between producers of commercial PC wargames and the professional military establishment.



The Macintosh version of arsenal's *TacOps*, soon to be a PC title, helped changed the U.S. military's minds about computer wargames.

William R. Trotter

"The IBM version of *TacOps* should have been on the shelves a year ago," lamented Degoey. "But we had a big problem with the programmer we hired to do the port from Mac to IBM — i.e., he wasn't doing any work. We've got a new team on the job now, and things are moving along swiftly." The long-awaited IBM version of *TacOps* should be in the stores not long after this issue hits the stands.

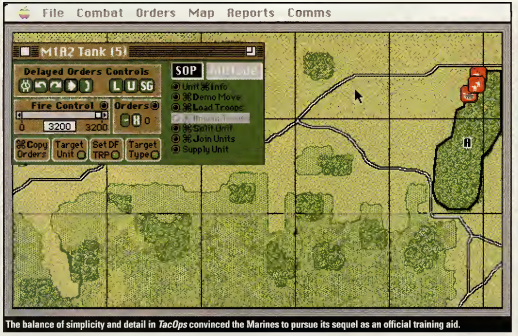
Not that the year's delay has been entirely wasted. *TacOps* was a one-man creation, designed and programmed by a retired career Marine, Maj. I. L. Holdridge, and the Major has been eagerly tweaking the IBM version to incorporate more than 150 enhancements suggested to him by devotees of the Mac version.

The armed forces are finally taking wargames seriously, with far-reaching implications for the genre — and for the way the U.S. military conducts its operations in the 21st Century.

TacOps' database of weapons platforms includes detailed photographs.

A lot of the people *TacOps* appealed to were the so-called "hard-core" wargamers, the ones who spend, Degoey estimates, "$600-700" a year on wargames. Until the *Panzer General* crossover phenomenon shook up the demographics, the "grognard" audience was a more or less stable 30-40 thousand consumers. But wargame sales for 1995 amounted to $51 million, indicating a growing interest by new computer owners, as well as the fact that middle-aged grognards are passing along their passion to their now-adolescent children.

"As it happened," Degoey explained, "some of Arsenal's investors are professional soldiers, and they recognized that *TacOps* was the first desktop, and *laptop*, battle management simulation that worked like the real thing. They understood the



The balance of simplicity and detail in *TacOps* convinced the Marines to pursue its sequel as an official training aid.

traditional Pentagon attitude that 'bigger' and 'more expensive' equals 'better,' and they knew all about JANUS and those other huge mainframe simulators."

They also knew that a new generation of career soldiers was moving into positions of high rank and authority, a generation that might very well be receptive to the idea of a good training simulation that was small enough and handy enough to be played anywhere, even in the field.

Through its military contacts, Arsenal arranged a demonstration of *TacOps* at the brand new Defense Modeling and Simulations Office at USMC headquarters in Quantico, VA. As Degoey tells it: "They looked at it, loved its potential — especially when we told them about the features that will be in *TacOps II* — and said: 'This needs to go on the Commandant's list of recommended games.'"

About ten days before the Desktop General interviewed Degoey, Arsenal has scored a similar triumph with the U.S. Army. "We were scheduled to give a thirty-minute presentation; it ended up lasting an hour and a half. The Army, too, immediately recognized the value of *TacOps* as a laptop training aid, something the Army does not now have.

"As one general put it to me, after the show, 'As much as the Army wants its young officers to read books, the reality is that they'd much rather play games. That being the case, I'd prefer to have them playing a game they can learn something from."

"There's a Lt. Col. in Korea who's been using the game extensively with his company commanders."

While no specific figures have been finalized yet — the "5,000 copies" was thrown out as hypothetical, so the Marines could go back to their calculators and have a benchmark for figuring out costs — Arsenal stands to make a handsome profit on the deal, especially if the Army comes in, too, as looks increasingly likely.

"We won't actually be selling them 5,000 boxed copies off-the-shelf, of course. What we'll be selling is what's called a 'site license' — that means we send them a number of CD master copies, which they will reproduce up to the limit specified in the contract."

Lest the reader become confused, the game in question here is *TacOps II*, which will have real-world maps (because *TacOps I* was designed on the Mac and is being ported straight to IBM, it will have abstract terrain and only two levels of elevation), and will use the same one-square-kilometer grid system used on actual Army and Marine maps.

As part of its contract with the Defense Department, Arsenal will pre-load any real-world terrain the armed forces want to rehearse scenarios on: Bosnia, the Ukraine, wherever American troops might be ordered into the field, free of charge. Maps will be accurate down to *five meters* and will included the actual regions where large-scale training exercises are currently held.

The result: a compact, lightweight, tool that will enable commanders to formulate and rehearse tactical plans and variants before they actually go into the field. In fact, Degoey stated, the existing Mac version of the original game is already being used this way — unofficially, of course — by several commanders. "There's a Lt. Col. commanding an armored battalion in Korea, for example, who's been using the game extensively with his company commanders. He's very enthusiastic about it, and can hardly wait to get his hands on *TacOps II*."

The advanced game should be finished by late 1996, at which time the interaction between commercial wargame developers and the Pentagon ought to be in high gear. Degoey hopes to implement network playability by early 1997. Currently, *TacOps I* can be played solo against the AI, by two players at the same computer, players, by E-mail, and, via serial cable connection, over limited networks.

What else does Arsenal have in the pipeline? A list of games that should cause wargamers to salivate with anticipation. Between the IBM release of *TacOps I* and *TacOps II* will be *Panzers East*, a tactical level Russian Front game that will be the company's first CD-ROM-only product. "The maps alone will require 50MBs", Degoey said.

Farther down the line is *The Road to Moscow*, a chief-of-staff-level game that will let the player re-fight the East Front campaign on a grand scale. "We'll be using one-to-two-million scale maps, and you can literally run the entire war. It'll be the most comprehensive and realistic Russian Front game anyone's ever developed."

Equally tantalizing is *Pacific Tide*, an epic recreation of the Pacific War. "Our developers have had unequalled access to Japanese archives. Not only will you be able to manage every ship in every navy, but also every variant of all the aircraft, such as the ship-busting B-25s with 75mm cannon mounted in their noses. The research is so massive, the database so huge, we're even discussing the option of publishing the *entire* Japanese Order of Battle as a hardback reference book, something that will be invaluable to historians as well as game players. *Pacific Tide* will be *Victory at Sea* the way it *ought* to have been done."

Degoey is extremely excited by the prospects of this new cooperation between the military professionals and the game developers. "It will break down that old, long-standing, dismissive attitude between the hobbyists and the professionals. The men now moving into advanced rank don't need to be persuaded of the value of off-the-shelf wargames; the technology has enabled those games to reach such a degree of realism and sophistication that they will render those huge mainframe simulators as obsolete as dinosaurs."

The end-result of this quiet revolution in attitude can only mean one thing for consumers: even better wargames, and a wider, more varied market for the games themselves.

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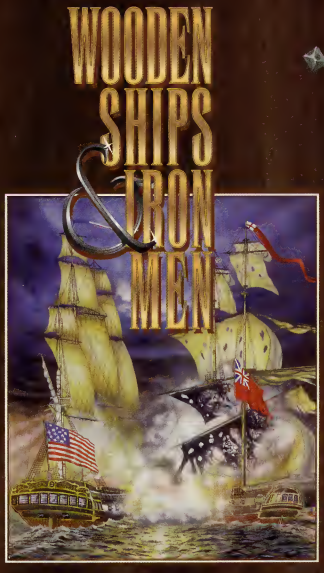

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VictorMaxx Gives us the Bird

It's true — for more than a year now, we've been waiting for someone to give us the Bird.

Back in the April 1995 issue, we ran a report on one of the more interesting pieces of hardware we saw at that year's Winter Consumer Electronics Show: a unique new wireless controller called the Bird. There was just one problem: the Bird was created by an Australian group called VIR Systems, and at the time they were still looking for a company to help them manufacture and distribute their invention.

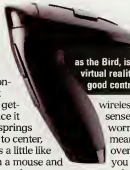
We weren't too worried, though, because the Bird seemed like a great idea. We knew some savvy hardware company would snap it up sooner or later.

As it turns out, it was later rather than sooner, but VictorMaxx, the company that makes the CyberMaxx virtual reality headset, has added the Bird to its line. They're calling it the VIR one, but it's the same amazing controller we first saw at the 1995 CES.

So what, exactly, is the Bird — er, the VIR one? It's a wireless joystick that works surprisingly well.

The VIR one doesn't require any special hardware or drivers; its "docking bay" base plugs into any standard PC joystick port. And it uses wide-angle infrared technology to transmit signals to the base, which means you don't have to worry about making sure it's always pointing directly at the receiver. In fact, the VIR one works at just about any angle, and it has a range of about 15 feet.

Using the VIR one is about as simple as it could be; you take the comfortable, contoured grip out of its base, tap a fire button to power it up (it uses three AAA batteries), and click the direction keys on top to calibrate it. After that, it works just like any other joystick — tilt it to the left in *Doom*, and you turn left; tilt it forward, and you're walking.



The VIR one controller, formerly known as the Bird, is the ideal companion to a virtual reality headset — and it's a good controller, to boot.

Unlike many earlier wireless controllers, the VIR one is extremely responsive, although it does take some getting used to; since it has no base or springs to bring it back to center, it actually works a little like a cross between a mouse and a joystick. Once you've gotten the hang of it, though, the VIR one is a joy to use, and in many ways it's more flexible than any traditional joystick.

Of course, there's one obvious question: just how useful *is* a wireless controller, beyond simply being able to say "look at me, I'm using a wireless joystick just makes sense; one less cable to worry about suddenly means one less cable to trip over. And, let's face it — you probably feel silly enough with several pounds of high-tech electronics strapped to your face; you don't need the additional humiliation of being wrapped several times in a joystick cable.

Beyond that, well — what's *wrong* with having the VIR one just so you can say "look at me, I'm using a wireless controller"? The fact is, it's a really cool piece of hardware, and a perfect addition to the game system with everything.

Dan Bennett

One of the niftiest things we saw at the 1995 Consumer Electronics Show is finally available in the states. It has a new name, but it's still a rare bird.

The Eagle Has Landed

Back in the November issue, when I looked at Suncom's F-15E Talon joystick, I promised to give you the word on its big brother, the Eagle, as soon as I got my hands on one.

Well, the top of Suncom's Strike Fighter line is finally available, and it's even more impressive than its predecessor. The Eagle has the same dashing good looks and rock-solid construction as all the other sticks in the line, and it improves on the Talon's programmability to an amazing degree: each of its four fire buttons and two four-way hat switches can be programmed, but where the Talon's buttons can only store a single keystroke, the Eagle's can store as many as *twenty* keystrokes (that's ten keystrokes when you press a button, and another ten when you release it). That means that not only can you use a single button to cycle through your weapons, for instance — you can also have one button instantly issue an entire cheat-code. If those relentless Ettins in *Hexen* are keeping you too busy to type "SATAN," you can just tap one of the Eagle's buttons, and voila! You're in God Mode.

The Eagle makes programming much less of a chore than its counterparts from Thrustmaster. A simple but crystal-clear graphic interface lets you select the button or hat-switch you want to program, then you simply type the keystrokes you want it to store. A click of the mouse, and the program is uploaded to the Eagle, where it stays in RAM even if you turn off your PC.

The Eagle doesn't come cheap; it carries a list price of just under $200. But street prices should be significantly lower, and if you're looking for a programmable joystick that balances gorgeous form with tremendous functionality, the Eagle belongs on your short list of candidates.

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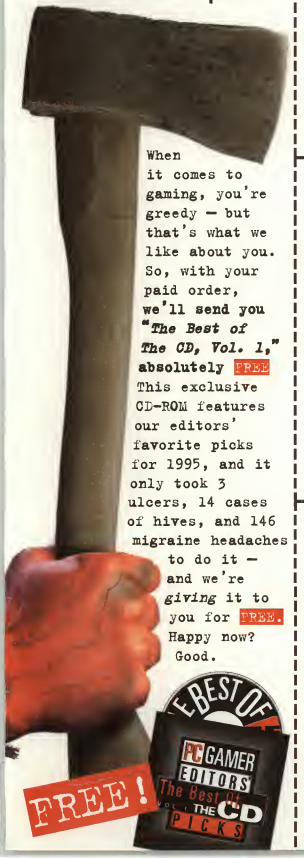

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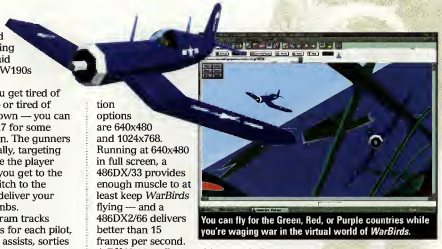
WarBirds Takes to the Air



You can fly for the Green, Red, or Purple countries while you're waging war in the virtual world of *WarBirds*.

Here's the latest news from the online combat front: it's a beautiful day for flying, but watch out for bogies, 'cause these guys are killers. Welcome to *WarBirds*, the online air combat sim from Interactive Creations Inc. It's fast and furious dog-fighting action, real time against real people.

ICI is calling *WarBirds* the first flight sim in its Confirmed Kill product line. On a given night, you'll find some 50 to 60 computer pilots fighting it out for aerial supremacy; the skies are full of World War Two beauties: B17s, Bf109s, F4s, FW190s, P38s, P39s, P51s, Spitfires, and Zeroes.

There are three countries — Green, Red, and Purple — waging war in this virtual world. OK, so the country names may not inspire the sort of patriotism to cause you to risk your life, but once you get in on the action, you'll be ready to pay the ultimate sacrifice for the good old Green.

Once you log into the system, you can go straight to the Arena, choose a country and engage in a deadly free-for-all. There are historical scenarios, too, complete with realistic maps and orders of battle (the first historical scenario, Kiel, had 40 P51s escorting 18 B17s in a raid defended by FW190s and ME109s).

When you get tired of dogfighting — or tired of getting shot down — you can jump into a B17 for some bombing action. The gunners fire automatically, targeting whatever plane the player tracks. When you get to the target, you switch to the bombsight to deliver your payload of bombs.

The program tracks career statistics for each pilot, including kills, assists, sorties flown, and accuracy for guns, rockets, and bombs. Players are also assigned ratings based on their performance.

Lee Buchanan

WarBirds looks very impressive. The realistic — and therefore somewhat sluggish — flight models will frustrate some rookies, but you won't hear too many complaints from the real flight-sim junkies. There's plenty of action, the graphics look great, and it's reasonably priced: $2 per hour, $1.75 if you hook up through Concentric Network Corp.

ICI and Graphics Simulations have cooked up lightning-fast frame rates, with very little of the warping that has marred other online air combat. How good is the frame rate? Your only resolution options are 640x480 and 1024x768. Running at 640x480 in full screen, a 486DX/33 provides enough muscle to at least keep *WarBirds* flying — and a 486DX2/66 delivers better than 15 frames per second. A DX4/100 really gets things cranked up, running 1024x768 mode at more than 20 frames per second. And with a Pentium, the high-res graphics are as smooth as silk.

WarBirds is the first flight sim in the Confirmed Kill product line from ICI.

Finally some good news for gamers in the convoluted Confirmed Kill saga; *WarBirds* is up and running, and it's an online fighter jock's dream.

WarBirds requires full Internet access (with a UNIX-shell TELNET connection); it runs under DOS, so you can't use America Online, CompuServe WinCim or other Windows-based Internet access programs. ICI recommends using a locally-based provider, if possible.

Here's how to hook up for some first-rate online air combat: First, download the front-end programs, either at ICI's FTP site at *icigames.com*, or at the ICI home page on the Web at *http://www.icigames.com*. Download the front-end programs. Remember, the version numbers in these files may change by the time you find them, but the base file names should be the same. First, you need wbui101.exe and wbbase10.exe. Now for the big mother: You can download the full graphics packages for either 640x480 or 1024x768 resolution (called ART640v6.EXE or 102v6.exe).

The 1024 package is about 8MBs, so keep a good book handy while you download. These self-extracting files contain artwork for all nine planes available in *WarBirds*. If you don't have the time to download the big files, you can download individual plane graphics, but you'll be stuck with those graphics even when you're flying another fighter. There's also a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) file, along with some utilities and other help files.

Getting Your VESA In Order

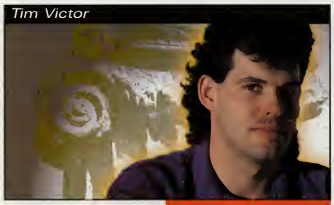
It's important to remember that PCs were originally designed to be number-crunching, data-processing business machines. The first models didn't offer much as far as graphics were concerned, and PC games really didn't get moving until IBM introduced the VGA (Video Graphics Array) display card, which could finally run decent-looking games. It didn't take long before IBM's competitors had improved on VGA, producing Super VGA (SVGA) video cards that could put even more pixels and more colors on the screen.

But these new cards presented a problem; at resolutions and color depths beyond VGA, no standards existed, each card worked differently. Just to get an SVGA card into higher resolution modes like 640x480 or 800x600 a programmer had to start with a list of known video cards and write case-by-case code to identify each brand and model of video card, then perform the particular set of instructions that would switch that card into the right mode.

Supporting all those different cards was such a pain that most programs just used one of the VGA video modes and left it at that. But in 1989, a group of hardware manufacturers created VESA, the Video Electronics Standards Association, to figure out a way to remedy this situation. They came up with a standard software interface for SVGA video cards called the VESA BIOS Extension (VBE).

First of all, about that name: BIOS stands for "Basic Input-Output System," the library of utility subroutines stored in Read-Only Memory (ROM) on a PC's motherboard. BIOS routines perform a lot of the mundane work of running a PC, like initializing all the hardware on power-up and operating the floppy disk drives. But the BIOS doesn't deal with some common devices: mice, sound cards, CD-ROM drives — and video cards. The first three devices didn't exist when the PC BIOS was laid out, so their absence isn't so strange, but PCs have always had some kind of video card.

It turns out that functions to clear the screen, display text and switch between video modes have always been included in ROM on the video card itself, in a "Video BIOS Extension" rather than in the main BIOS on the motherboard. The VBE standard added a few new functions to let a program find out which display modes are available from a particular card, switch between SVGA modes, and manage the card's video display memory in each mode.


Tim Victor

One very important distinction: the VESA BIOS Extension and the VESA Local Bus slot standards were created by the same organization, but that's as far as the connection goes. Even if your video card plugs into a PCI local bus slot, as in most Pentium systems, it still has ROM onboard containing VBE code.

For illustration programs, CAD software and other applications where a high screen resolution is critical, the VBE standard took off right away. But in games, where high frame rates and smooth animation matter most, a high-resolution video mode just meant having to draw that many more pixels on the screen for each frame. For a few years, VBE was less important for game software than graphics applications, but now that situation is reversed.

Most business applications now run under Windows, which has its own graphics driver system that makes the VESA standard unnecessary. Windows video drivers also support hardware blitting, line drawing, and other accelerator functions found on most current graphics cards, while the VESA standard treats all video cards as simple, dumb frame buffers. Windows 95's game subsystem has its attractions, but it's still basically an MS-DOS world if you're talking about high-performance PC games. And while frame rates remain as important as ever, a good Pentium system has the horsepower to move an awful lot of pixels, and VESA video support is a key part of new, high-res games like *FIFA 96*, *MechWarrior II*, and *Duke Nukem 3D*.

With more and more games boasting high-resolution, Super VGA graphics, the VESA standard is suddenly becoming important to gamers. So what, exactly, is it?

The VBE standard was revised a couple of times before it settled at version 1.2 in 1992, and that's still the version you'll find in most video cards' ROMs today. That might be all you need, but in a few situations, an upgrade could help or even be required. Sometimes a card's VBE is just plain buggy, and you need an upgrade to run certain games. There's also version 2.0 of the VBE standard, ratified late in 1994, which offers a new protected-mode interface. Some games that use DOS extender software will run noticeably faster if VBE 2.0 is available.

One way to upgrade a card's VESA BIOS Extension is to replace the ROM chip on the card, but usually that isn't required. A simpler way is to load a new driver as a TSR (Terminate-and-Stay-Resident) program, temporarily displacing the BIOS extension software on the card. This sort of loadable VBE module was VESA's way of dealing with existing SVGA cards when VBE was first introduced, and it's still the best way to fix a card with a buggy or outdated VBE. If an update is available for your video card, the card's manufacturer's BBS or web site is usually the best place to find it. Other good places to look include online services and even game CDs, which sometimes include dozens of loadable VBE modules intended to support their own high-res graphics.

Generally you need to find a VBE module for your particular model of video card, although a driver will occasionally work with any card that's based on a certain video chipset. The exception is UniVBE from SciTech Software, a one-size-fits-all driver that adds VBE 2.0 support to just about any PC video card. It's available as shareware on the Internet at *scitechsoft.com*; it can be found on CompuServe and AOL — and it comes with many of the latest SVGA games.

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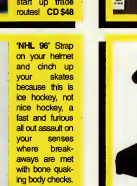

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STRATEGY CENTRAL

SOLUTIONS • TECHNIQUES • QUICK TIPS

Once again, the Strategy Central crew has channeled its unbridled energy into finding winning strategies for those troubling computer games. This month, they tackle the Nazis in SSI's *Allied General*, and even find time to dig up a few cheats for *The Hive*, *Earthworm Jim*, and *Terminator: Future Shock*.

Write to us at:

PC GAMER

150 North Hill Dr., Suite 40, Brisbane, CA 94005 or E-mail: peeceegee@aol.com 74431,3433@compuserve.com

Allied General

Here's how to run through those Nazi fortifications like grease through a goose!

SSI's latest wargaming tour de force, *Allied General*, puts you in the heart of World War Two conflict as you command Allied troops and armor in a number of historical scenarios. Needless to say, it'll take a top-notch general to see your forces to victory in these bloody battles. So we called on wargame veteran T. Liam McDonald to offer a down-and-dirty tutorial on how to succeed at the front.

Aiming 101

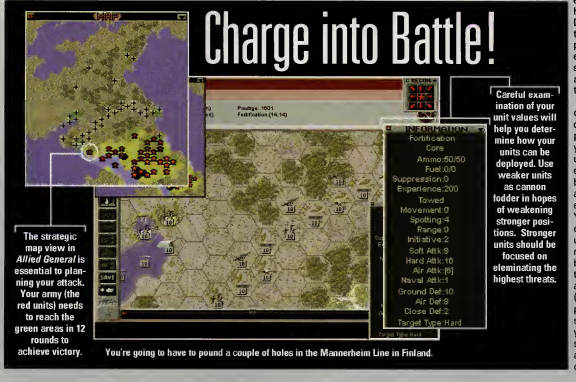
In *Allied General*, as in any wargame, you have to study the terrain, the victory requirements, and the units at your disposal before starting. When you start a new battle in *Allied General*, take time to look at the strategic map. There are several important things to make note of: First, white hexes are your high-value hexes, and must be adequately defended in order to win.

More importantly, green hexes are the objectives. Not every city is an objective, so you have to see where the green hexes are and figure out the best way to get to them. Roads are essential to moving troops fast, and seizing control of important crossroads will gain you vital mobility. Some cities must be seized because they lay astride important crossroads, because their proximity threatens your lines, or because they are near important objectives and will be useful in producing and repairing units. Airfields are also important targets to capture where possible, because controlling the enemy's airports will limit their ability to use air power against you and give you increased air-strike abilities.

Finally, you have to study the units you're given at the start of a game, the units you can buy, based on the historical period, and the possible upgrades. There are several important numbers associated with units, the most useful being experience, strength, and hard and soft attack. Defense ratings, initiative and — for units pushing deep into enemy territory — spotting ability are also important factors to consider.

The composition of your forces is crucial, especially in campaign games. When you start a new battle, upgrade units wherever possible to the best currently available, and always use elite replacements. You'll want to build elite, over-strength units through replacement and successful battles. A tight selection of strong armor and advanced infantry (such as bridging or paratrooper infantry) should be the core of your group. A few 15-strength units can cut a path through most opposition.

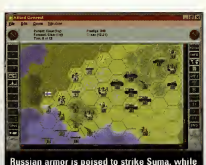
Charge into Battle!



The strategic map view in *Allied General* is essential to planning your attack. Your army (the red units) needs to reach the green areas in 12 rounds to achieve victory.

Careful examination of your unit values will help you determine how your units can be deployed. Use weaker units as cannon fodder in hopes of weakening stronger positions. Stronger units should be focused on eliminating the highest threats.

You're going to have to pound a couple of holes in the Mannerheim Line in Finland.



Russian armor is poised to strike Suma, while artillery and conscripts soften the enemy up. Use engineers on hardened targets such as the hardpoint or forts.

Finland

OK, that's enough of the grade-school primer; it's time to get down in the mud. Let's take a look at the Russo-Finnish battle on the Karelian Isthmus, which can be tough to win as the Russians. The victory requirements are to take two southern cities (Summa and Taipale), the northwestern city of Tali and its port at Viipuri, and finally the northernmost city of Sortevala. The problem is the Mannerheim line: a rigid defensive line of pillboxes and World War One-era forts bisecting the Isthmus.

First, you'll need to understand your forces, which are a mishmash of good and bad units. The conscripts and auxiliary units are awful, and the best (and most historical) use for them is to charge pillboxes and divert Finnish fire — in effect, these troops are cannon fodder. Also useless are the BT-5 and BT-7 tanks, which seem to be made of papier-maché. If you use them, you'll lose. Upgrade as many as you can to KV 1/39s; they're slower, but have much better defense and attack ratings. You'll want to start with five or six of them. You'll also want to get another engineer unit or two, which you can do by upgrading a Regular unit.

Lay some artillery fire on Terijok, near Leningrad. You have two cruisers and plenty of artillery, so you can weaken it enough for the adjacent conscript unit to take it easily. This clears the road to Summa. You'll need to organize two battle groups (Eastern and Western) based around the KVs. Divvy up the infantry, cavalry, and artillery between the two. The Western group will push towards Summa, then up to Viipuri, while the Eastern will hit Taipale and then make a dash for Sortevala. Any extra units should go with the Western force. Mount the bridging engineer and send him north with the cruisers, and mount the paratroopers and send them as scouts.

Saddle Up!

Move out horse cavalry first to get a feel for the area, then send up conscripts, other infantry, armor, and artillery. There will be a major bottleneck if you don't juggle your units just right to keep the roads clear. This can paralyze you long enough to cost you the battle. Speed is crucial.

The Russians have pushed up from Leningrad and taken Terijoki, just prior to moving west for the objective city of Suma.

A Pyrrhic victory: The Russians take Taipale, but with heavy losses, and too late to be of use.

Once you've pushed north a bit on both flanks, both battle groups will instantly run smack into the solid wall of the Mannerheim line. You're only going to pierce this *at the two cities*, avoiding the center. Use conscripts to draw fire from the pill boxes, then pour artillery on them and start to break down the cities' defenses with stronger infantry and armor. Each city has a 37mm anti-tank piece, which you'll need to clear with artillery and infantry, so your tanks can maneuver in peace. Take out enemy artillery as quickly as possible, and keep your own artillery fire up. It should only take a few turns to liberate both cities. You can use your paratroopers to either harry units from behind the Mannerheim line, or save them for the attack on Sortevala.

Keep moving up the coast with your cruisers, laying fire on the forts while staying out of range as much as possible. Watch out for the two subs patrolling this area: they're not much, but they can take a bite out of you before they go down. You're going to want to bring these ships into the channel (which will draw shore fire), so you can begin to pound Viipuri.

Finnish Them Off

Once both cities are liberated, secure the area by using armor to track down the few artillery pieces, then push both battle groups north toward their objectives (Viipuri/Tali and Sortevala), leaving only a small garrison behind. You might want to take the opportunity to pick up some new KVs. Some Finnish infantry will slow you down — and they are, pound for pound, much better than the Russians. They'll put up a tough fight, but don't get bogged down: keep moving. Get your engineers in on the northern side of Viipuri, and lay in for the siege. It will take heavy barrages to loosen these hexes up, so don't commit your infantry and armor too soon. Chip at them for a couple turns, then go in for the kill.

As with any good battle plan, the key is to stick to your objectives. Don't try to crash the whole line, and don't get bogged down in the forests or swamps. Properly weakened with artillery fire and polished off with a tough armored punch, the Finns can be beaten with a major victory in less than ten turns.

The Hive

This game's full of bugs — space bugs!

After doing a little digging, we've uncovered a cheat that lets you skip through any of the missions in *The Hive*, and even take on the big boss in the game's flashy finale. To use the cheat, type in TORYO (all capital letters) at the player name screen, and you'll gain access to any of the game's twenty missions. If you can't get the cheat to work with an installed version of *The Hive*, try re-installing the game and use the cheat the first time you play.

The mysterious password TORYO will zoom you to any of the twenty mission screens in *The Hive*.

***Earthworm Jim* holds some fun surprises when you use the HATMAN cheat, but you'll also find that the familiar *Doom* codes IDDQD and IDKFA are fun as well.**

Earthworm Jim

Cheat your way to happiness in the slimiest action game yet!

Activision's action-packed *Earthworm Jim* follows the antics of Jim, a humble earthworm turned superhero, as he blasts and jumps his way through some of the most unusual settings we've seen. But it can be a little challenging at times and the strategy crew has been hard at work searching for codes to help get through this tough game. To enable the cheats, simply type them at the game screen.

EARTHWORM JIM CHEAT CODES

ITSAWONDERFUL — Get an extra life.
HATMAN — Turns Jim into a stick figure.
ONANDONANDON — Maximum number of game continues.
POPQUIZHOTSHOT — Get 1000 bullets.
SLAUTHERHOUSE — Access the first five levels of the game.

Reader's Request

Terminate my agony in *Terminator: Future Shock*!

Dear Strategy Central,

I've been playing computer games for a couple years and have bought just about every magazine out there, looking for one that can hold my interest (most end up in the garbage after a day or two). But ever since I picked up *PC Gamer*, I read all of it — every line. I especially love the cheats you publish in Strategy Central, but unfortunately, I haven't seen the ones I need to complete my newest computer game. I'm playing *Terminator: Future Shock*, and I can't get too far. While I thought I was a good *Doom* player, I'm not used to looking up and down, and I can't seem to find all the weapons I need to complete the mission. Can you please help?

Troy McAndrews
Indianapolis, Indiana

Hey! I think you're not good! I'll never be your best friend!

Well, Troy, nobody said it would be easy to go toe-to-toe with those mechanical monstrosities from CyberDyne Systems. Even we have had our difficulties with this one and its eerie, post-apocalyptic horrors. Assistant Disc Editor Mike Wolf got so frightened, he became hopelessly tangled up in his mouse cord, almost bringing the network down, until our fearless Editor Dan Bennett stepped in and took control of the situation with some moist towelettes.

So, to help you get the edge in Bethesda's Terminator: Future Shock, *we sent the strategy crew into SkyNet's secret base and downloaded a few of the secret codes that'll give you the extra firepower and health you'll need to rip those 'bots a new one.*

To use the codes listed above, hit the Alt and the / keys at the same time during the game, and you'll see a prompt in the lower left corner of the screen. At this prompt, type the code for the cheat you wish to enable and hit Enter.

PCG

TERMINATOR: FUTURE SHOCK CHEAT CODES

If *Terminator: Future Shock* has left you fried, try using some of these codes to jump-start your adventure.

BANDAID — Replenishes power and armor points.
FIREPOWER — Gives you all of the game's weapons.
SUPERUZI — Gives you a SuperUzi loaded with 9999 ammo.
NEXTMISSION — Transports you to the next mission.
TURBO — Activates the turbo mode during the game.
GARBLE — Lets you see the cheat codes you're typing.
WHOAMI — Displays the coordinates of your location.

What you fear, you will covet.
What you loathe, you will worship.
What you ravage, you will rule.
What you are, you will abandon.

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PC GAMER

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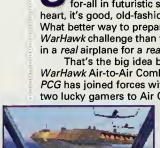
THE WARHAWK AIR-TO-AIR COMBAT CONTEST

Sony's new *WarHawk: The Red Mercury Missions* is a fast-paced free-for-all in futuristic skies — but at its heart, it's good, old-fashioned air combat. What better way to prepare for the *WarHawk* challenge than to take to the air in a *real* airplane for a *real* dogfight?

That's the big idea behind the *WarHawk* Air-to-Air Combat Contest; *PCG* has joined forces with Sony to send two lucky gamers to Air Combat USA where they'll learn air combat from expert pilots — then grab the stick of a real plane for some air-to-air action. Just enter the contest, and you and a friend — or foe — could be on your way to an intense crash-course (pardon the expression) in deadly dogfighting!



Sony's *WarHawk* is a mix of air-to-air action and impressive visuals.

ONE GRAND PRIZE:

- Tickets to Air Combat USA flight school
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- Two nights' lodging at the Disneyland Hotel

THREE FIRST PRIZES:

- CH Products F-16 Combat Stick joystick
- *WarHawk* PC game

FIVE THIRD PRIZES:

- *WarHawk* PC game

To enter, just tune your Internet World Wide Web browser software to the Sony web site at *http://www.sony.com* and fill out the official entry form you'll find there. Good luck, and check six!

No purchase necessary to enter. Sweepstakes open to all legal U.S. residents. Limit one entry per person. Official sweepstakes rules available at http://www.sony.com. All entries must be received by April 30, 1996. All entries become the property of Sony Interactive PC Software America, and none will be returned. Sony Interactive PC Software America assumes no responsibility for incomplete, illegible, lost, late, or misdirected entries or mail. Sweepstakes open to all legal U.S. residents, except employees of Sony Interactive PC Software America, PROMOT, INC., and their parent and affiliated companies, subsidiaries, retailers, advertising agencies, promotion agencies, and the immediate families of each. The prizes will be awarded, and the winner will be notified by mail. Prize winners will be randomly selected from all eligible entries received. Drawing will be held on or about May 3, 1996, under the supervision of PROMOT, INC., an independent judging organization whose decisions are final. By entering the sweepstakes, entrants accept and agree to be bound by these rules and the decision of the judges. If a minor wins a prize, it will be awarded in the name of his or her parent or legal guardian. Odds of winning depend on the total number of eligible entries received. Sony Interactive PC Software America reserves the right to substitute a prize of equal value if the prize is unavailable. No substitutes or transfer of prizes allowed. Taxes are the sole responsibility of the winners. Offer void when prohibited or restricted by federal, state, or local laws. Winner and companion will be required to execute and return within 15 days of notification postmark an Affidavit of Eligibility and Release. If completed Affidavit is not received within 15 days, or if prize notification is undeliverable, an alternate winner will be selected. By submitting an entry, a potential winner agrees to allow use of his or her likeness and/or photograph for advertising this or similar promotions without compensation unless otherwise prohibited by law. For a list of winners, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to be received by April 30, 1996, to: WarHawk Air to Air Combat Sweepstakes Winners List, P.O. Box 642160, Los Angeles, CA 90064. VT and WA residents need not include return postage. Sony Interactive PC Software America, PROMOT, INC., and their parent and affiliated companies, subsidiaries, directors, officers, agents, employees, and retailers shall not be responsible for any taxes, damages, expenses, losses, or injury, direct, incidental, consequential, or otherwise, with respect to, or in any way arising from, the sweepstakes or the acceptance or use of the prize.

Our last reader question got a good response, so here's another issue to ponder: Even as PC games get more complex, the technology still comes first; game designers usually decide what *kind* of game they're going to do (a first-person shooter like *Doom*, for example), *then* they decide what sort of story to tell with it. Do you think storytelling will ever come first — or do you even think it *should*?

Let's Hear From You!

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or E-mail to:

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74431,3433@compuserve.com

More on Multima

Dear PC Gamer,
Howdy! Here's my take on the whole "Multima" thing (from the Alternate Lives column in January, 1996):

To achieve a perfect online roleplaying game, one must fill all the character slots with real people, and the sysops, or dungeon masters, or whatever, can't intrude on the players' privacy. Say the king of some country is played 24 hours a day, by different sysops, and all of his staff and court are played by actual gamers; I'm Court Wizard, and you're a Knight of the Flatulent Horse. I tell you I'm sick of the king, and I want a new king. You and I, with a bunch of conspirators, hatch a plan to assassinate the king. If we succeed, we get a new king. If our group contains a Judas, maybe we're all caught by Origin-controlled city guards. Say the punishment is exile; we could be thrown into another "country" with completely different players and another king.

As for quests, it's real simple: The folks at Origin simply come up with a batch of quests and post them (*Quest for Glory*-style) in the various guilds. Players simply read the posters and set forth. Doesn't really matter who wins; they're all havin' fun.

Sincerely,
Ismael Vicens, Jr.
Old Bridge, NJ

You've hit on another thing that's generally missing in computer roleplaying games these days, Ismael. Games with real human players not only mean much more intelligent allies and opponents; they also mean much more freedom. A human dungeon master can react appropriately to anything a player cares to try, just like in the real world, you can do anything you want, no matter how daring — or foolish — it may be. That feeling of freedom makes all the difference in the world, and the people who end up in charge of tomorrow's online roleplaying games will be wise to keep that in mind.

Hard-core gamers who love Star Wars would do well to skip LucasArts' *Rebel Assault II* and go for the fantastic *X-Wing* and *TIE Fighter* (above) CD-ROMs.

Video Revisited

Dear PC Gamer,
You've been asking about full-motion video in computer games, and whether it's worth anything or not — well, I just received *Rebel Assault II* (hey, I'm a big Star Wars fan), and the answer is no! FMV is not worth squat for games. I had so much fun one night sitting in front of my computer watching Rookie One and Ru Murleen duke it out in some of the worst acting and least interactive gaming I've ever seen. If you're a big Star Wars fan like me, resist the temptation. Go buy the *X-Wing* or *TIE Fighter* CD-ROMs; then you can actually enjoy interacting with some very enjoyable entertainment.

Bottner
via AOL

We have to agree, Bottner. Rebel Assault *and* Rebel Assault II *are just about the only disappointments that ever came out of the LucasArts offices. Like* Myst *and* The Seventh Guest*, the Rebel Assault games sell very well — we think that's probably because, like those other games, they're extremely attractive to newer gamers who haven't yet learned that multimedia flash is no substitute for interactivity.*

Playing Favorites

Dear PC Gamer,
In response to your question about old games that gamers still play: I've played *Ultima IV* a number of times. It was the first non-platform game I ever played on my Commodore 64, and it was just magical — I cared about those people, plus it had humor. I still have never been admitted to the inner sanctum, even with the code word — I guess my moral conduct suffered somewhere along the way, so I'll have to try again. If only life were as simple.

Sincerely,
Terry Davis
via the Internet

A lot of people still consider Ultima IV *to be the best of the series — which pretty much makes it one of the best computer roleplaying games ever. Does it have spectacular, texture-mapped 3D graphics or full digitized speech? Nope. What it has is a good story line and the most original quest in CRPG history; your goal is to become a really good person by practicing virtues like compassion, honesty, and self-sacrifice, as well as slaying legions of monsters. It's a far cry from the usual hack-and-slash fare.*

Dear PC Gamer,
The old game I currently play the most is a cheap strategy game called *War in Middle Earth*. It takes place in (you'll never guess) Middle Earth, the setting for Tolkien's masterpiece, *The Lord of the Rings*. It looks like the designer of the "epic" *Lords of Midnight* got most of his ideas from here; I would avoid *War in Middle Earth* like the plague were it not for the fact that you run into characters and armies from the books, and when you talk to them, the dialog *stinks*! It's atrocious! It's even funny!

For example, when you meet Radagast the Wizard, he's likely to say "Greetings! I bring ominous tidings: In

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Mitchell Delving, there is a healing brew." (Eek! Nothing more ominous than a healing brew!)

Mike Schorsch
via AOL

Well, that's a strange reason to keep playing a game, Mike, but it works for us. Ultimately, that's what an enduring game is: one that keeps you coming back because it continues to entertain you — for whatever reason.

Dear PCG,
The oldest game I play now is *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat*. I'll bet I'm not the only one that still loves that game. The most important part of a game — the part that makes it an instant classic — is the artificial intelligence of the enemies. The AI for pilots in *Yeager* is outstanding (I still have trouble downing MiG-17s with an F-4).

Thank you,
Eric Manookian
via the Internet

Gilding the Demon?

Dear PC Gamer,
Some say that *Doom* is dead, but what is all the fascination with making first-person shooters more detailed? The first time I played *Doom*, I fell in love with the simplicity of the game; you run, you shoot something, you open a door, you shoot something else. *Doom* never really required a lot of thought. Hidden doors were never that hard to find, and the scenes were never so detailed as to be a distraction. For that reason, *Doom* was always exciting and relaxing (I spend all day at work, in front of a computer, thinking real hard!).

Newer games that I've played seem to try to better *Doom* by having so many different types of weapons, power-ups, jumps, and little coins to pick up — or just such a high level of detail — that it's hard to separate the wheat from the chaff, as they say.

I agree that there is a market for newer, more realistic or complex shooters, but I firmly believe that sometimes less is more. Please don't let shooters evolve away from what made them so popular in the first place. Viva la *Doom*!

Sincerely,
Derek Ellington
Wake Forest, NC

We won't deny that Doom's simplicity is one of the keys to its tremendous charm, Derek — and there'll always be a place for good, old-fashioned lead-slinging, chainsaw-swinging fun. But we'd be doing gaming a disservice if we discouraged the natural evolution of more complex games. Larger numbers of weapons and power-ups may not be the answer, but first-person games with intriguing story lines and more varied goals (other than scurrying to the end of the maze) — games like Terminator: Future Shock *and* CyberMage *— are often a welcome change from the usual run-and-kill.*

PCG

Disc Discussion

Well, we can finally stop holding our collective breath; the first reactions to our new CD-ROM are in, and — with a few exceptions — they're very encouraging.

"...Wow! Wow! Your new Windows interface was certainly worth the price of admission. And, by the way, nice secretary...."
Robert Pearson
Meadville, PA

"...You folks have really outdone yourselves and set a new standard for 'interactive publishing....'"
John Butcher
Los Angeles, CA

"...Your new CD is nice, but it gets old fast; and I don't like having to click through a dozen screens just to get to the demos that I came to see in the first place...."
Ted Morgan
Columbia, MO

"...All I wanted to do was to try out the demo games, and now there is a lot of crap. Why change something that was working great? This is nothing but a headache...."
D. McDonald
Post Falls, ID

Alter your first visit to each disc, you can jump straight from the alley to the jukebox.

***EDITOR'S NOTE:** We realize you might not want to pay a visit to* PC Gamer *territory every time you run* The CD*, so keep in mind that after you've run our new interface the first time, you can skip all the trimmings and jump straight to the demo menu by clicking on the old jukebox you'll find in the alley at the start. And if you absolutely hate Windows, you can still try any of the demos on* The CD *the old-fashioned way — by typing the appropriate command at a DOS prompt. Just check out the Installation Shortcuts chart on page 9 for details.)*

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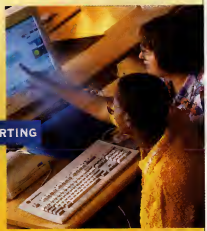

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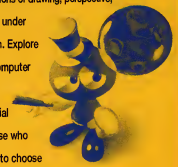

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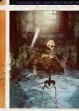

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Next Time in PC Gamer...

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Duke Nukem 3D

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PC GAMER

April 1996

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Stearns stood impatiently in the shadows of the terrorist camp. He was very good at killing, but this whole lurking thing ... not so much.

He had no choice, though. Dramatic tension had to be maintained, and the back story had to come from somewhere. If that meant cutting away from the mayhem at the camp to a long, rambling lump of exposition with Private Pepperhat and Colonel Gaskins, well — that was the price of staring in a lurid techno-thriller. Stearns could wait. His grapefruit spoon would taste terrorist blood soon enough.

Shifting his feet in the North African sand, he realized that he had time for a quick flashback. Nothing too elaborate, he decided — before too long, the sun would be chasing away the shadows that had him from view — but maybe a little something to heighten the mystery of his character and make him a little more sympathetic. It was too early to reveal the story behind the legendary grapefruit spoon, but —

Suddenly, Stearns was 12 years old, standing in the fragrant hayloft on his Aunt Mothra's thoroughbred ranch.

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Product Information Number 178

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